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## The history men

Roy Harris

R. W. BURCHFIELD (Editor)  
A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary: Volume 3: O-Sez  
1579pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford  
University Press, £55.  
0 19 861124 2

The compilers of the current Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary bear a heavy and inevitable burden of responsibility to us all. What they decide to put in and leave out may just as easily settle our case in the law courts, nurture our prejudices, or perpetuate injustices, as decide the results of television quizzes or games of Scrabble. Public reaction to fresh dictionary instalments, however, predictably concentrates on the Silly Season side of lexicography. Entries are added up. Statistics are produced. The "new words" hog the limelight, especially if outlandish or vaguely comic. (*Pissanting* and *profly* immediately top-scored with a caption in *The Times*.) Their origins are discussed. Their claims are scrutinized. Protests about the acceptance of some will follow just as surely as complaints about the exclusion of others. The wag, the scholarly amateur and the self-appointed expert all have a guaranteed field day. It is rather like a cross between the announcement of a team for the next Test match and the publication of the New Year Honours list.

There is something about dictionaries which encourages, even provokes, this razzle-dazzle. Partly responsible is the bizarre juxtaposition of totally unconnected items produced by adherence to alphabetical order. One is led on willy-nilly to look for yet odder snippets of information and more amusing or incredible bedfellows. The very convention of alphabetization simultaneously decontextualizes and recontextualizes words in a way which has no small element of surrealism in it. It makes the various senses of that word — a Mason or a Magritte. He becomes the agent of a poetization of the banal which is all the more stimulating for being the unsought consequence of a strait-laced professional practice.

Then there is our sheer admiration for the great feat of documentation, classification and analysis which these dogged lexicographers have accomplished. It is admiration

enhanced by being brought to realize at the same time our own deplorable ignorance of our native language and of the linguistic community to which we belong. Dictionaries are far more effective instruments for inculcating linguistic humility than prayer-books are for inculcating the spiritual variety.

What gets lost in all this is any critical appraisal of the role of the dictionary. Moreover, if the dictionary in question is the OED, one is dealing not just with a dictionary but with a national institution. Criticizing the OED or the principles on which it is based can hardly be other than a suspect enterprise which smacks of cultural subversion. So revered has the OED become as an institution that people forget — if they ever knew — that it was originally something of a subversive enterprise itself.

Precisely because lexicography on the OED scale is such a dauntingly formidable task, and cannot be expected in practice to please all the people all of the time, it has become, like the English monarchy, virtually immune from criticism in principle. The public is content to be amazed at how well the institution does what it does. Whether it could do better, or whether it should do something significantly different, are questions not often seriously considered. Niggling over details serves only to highlight the impressive record of instances in which there seems to be nothing to object to. So if I say that it seems to me monstrously question-begging to define *race riot* in the way the current Supplement does (as "a riot that results from racial hostility"), or that I think it has rather missed the point of the expression *to rabbit on*, or that it is surprisingly weak on the vocabulary of cricket (no *pad up*, no *plumb* in the "lbw" sense), and so on for a page or two, I shall in the end have done no more than provide a miserable list of petty quibbles which implicitly confirms the unimpeachability of 99.9 per cent of what the Supplement gets.

Anyone who wishes to broach more serious issues about dictionaries has to resist the temptation to tax lexicographers by itemizing the manifold minor inadequacies that close scrutiny of their compilations will always reveal.

The present Supplement is in many respects a remarkable posthumous tribute to the work of the founding father of the OED, Sir James Murray.

Murray's achievement was the definitive establishment of what might apply to "black-and-white" lexicography; and the Supplement perpetuates that eminently Victorian ideal.

The first principle of black-and-white lexicography is the importance it assigns to the printed word, and the consequent relegation of the vocabulary of everyday speech to an inferior position. It is essentially book-based lexicography. Quotations from printed sources are its primary evidence. From the outset it implicitly takes the language of the literate strata of society as having priority, and treats literary, educated usage preserved for posterity in the published works of major writers as providing the permanent standard against which to judge any other forms of English. Its concern is not with all words equally, but first and foremost with those words that are "fit for print". Such words select themselves by having already got into print in the works of reputable authors in the first place. It would be naive to ignore that at the basis of black-and-white lexicography, hard as it may try to present itself as "scientific", there is this form of cultural censorship.

Murray's original concept had been a more liberal one, based on the "new philology" which had emerged on the Continent in the course of the nineteenth century. Its methods were historical and comparative, and it accorded speech priority over writing.

But Murray found that the "new philology" from abroad represented a considerable threat to the cultural Establishment of Victorian England. He had to struggle against the Delegates of the Oxford University Press and their attempts to exclude all quotations from newspapers and all terms — including scientific terms — not attested in works of "literature". As Linde Dowling puts it in a recent paper, when Murray was doing his work, the Press was doing the work of culture and to open the defensive walls of Victorian literary decorum to attack from every side. To this succinct summary of the position, one might add that Murray's policy did not merely appear to subvert that authority, but effectively did so. In that respect, the qualms of the Delegates of the Oxford University Press were well founded. Progress in linguistics is always likely to be feared by

educational authorities, and rightly so. For there is nothing more conducive to questioning established cultural values than a reassessment of language and its role in human affairs.

Just to put Murray's publication in some kind of historical and intellectual perspective, it is perhaps worth quoting from the 1897 edition of *Everybody's Pocket Cyclopaedia* on the subject of the English language. There we are told that: "Shakespeare, who had the richest vocabulary used by any Englishman, employed only 16,000 words. Milton could pick out from 8,000, but the average man, a graduate of one of the great universities, rarely has a vocabulary of more than 3,000 or 4,000 words. The ordinary person can get along very comfortably with 500 words, and in the rural districts a knowledge of 200 words is sufficient to carry a man through his life." By "the great universities" are evidently meant Oxford and Cambridge (of which the average man is a graduate). This "average man" is clearly more of a lexicographer than the man of the "rural districts", who seems to be envisaged as going around uttering sparse, Targan-like monosyllables ("Oats", "Hay", "Dung", "Stewth", etc., up to a limit of 200) as the needs of rustic intercourse dictate. What Murray published certainly put an end to certain ignorant misconceptions that had previously flourished unchecked.

Like all British radical initiatives, however, Murray's lexicography succumbed to compromise and Establishment assimilation. The eventual knighthood which he almost refused (because such honours tended "to make people Tory and when they were from popular sympathies") was symbolic. The OED was destined to be a bastion of philological conservatism, not a right-mindedness. Not until 1972 did it officially recognize the existence of various centuries-old "four-letter" words. Even then, the editor had to apologize with a self-congratulatory coyness that made one wince — and a hardly coincidental lapse into French ("no English-language dictionary contained the more notorious of the sexual words, *monsieur* *chugé* *ton* *ceh*..."). The *risqué* words in question were promptly provided with "full supporting evidence" in the shape of impeccable literary attestations, presumably long on hand in the Oxford archives, but hitherto suppressed.

Under Murray's broadminded successors, however, literary snobbery continued to pervade the OED, and by 1972 had hardened into official policy as regards new admissions. If you happened to be a famous author, you could take the liberty of inventing a word, or cribbing one from a foreign language, and your holdness was likely to be held to "enrich" the English language (however absurd, unnecessary or trivial the innovation). But if you were just a reporter writing for the local paper, or a civil servant drafting a document, you apparently had no business introducing new words at all, however useful. This is an editorial policy which will admit almost anything into a dictionary, provided it comes from the prestigious pen of some literary lion — a Samuel Beckett (*ulambia*) or a Virginia Woolf (*scroloping*). No protest against including fun-words in a dictionary is here intended. The point is that the OED's "fun" has to be sanctioned by literary respectability. And the obligatory route to literary respectability is via the printed word.

Black-and-white lexicography is also black-and-white in that it takes it upon itself to pronounce authoritatively on the rights and wrongs of usage. In Murray's case, this was genuine Victorian dogmatism grafted on to a schoolmaster's sense of duty to his pupils and a desire to "improve" people's English. In Murray's successors, it became simply donnish conservatism, tinged by sheer reluctance to accept that anyone else's practice or opinion should take precedence over their own.

The difference in attitude is neatly illustrated by two anecdotes on record. When someone appealed to Murray for guidance on correct pronunciation he replied: "It is a free country, and a man may call a vase a vase, a vase, a vase, or a vase, as he pleases. And why should he not? We do not all think alike, walk alike, or dine alike; why should we not use our liberty in speech also, so long as the purpose of speech, to be intelligible, and its grace, are not interfered with?" More recently, however, when the Post Office rang up the OED headquarters to find out whether the correct spelling of the adjective from the verb *to dial* was *dialable* or *dialible*, it emerged that the editor of the Concise Oxford Dictionary (who on this occasion threw in a double *l*, whereas the there was a double *l*, whereas the

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letter from Alain Peyrefitte included in the appendix (and described by him as "un coup de poignard dans le dos").

One is obliged to judge Pompidou's version of events in the light of other questions. Once the elections had been won, he claims that he expressed a desire to resign. The General tried to persuade him not to do so. Many others, including his own family, urged that it was his duty to stay. Eventually, after much heart-searching, he let de Gaulle know that he would stay on after all, only to discover that Couve de Murville had already been offered the post. He also discovered (although it is not clear when) that Couve de Murville had been asked to become prime minister as early as 1967. Thus at the very time when the General was pretending that he wanted Pompidou to be his prime minister he really wanted to get rid of him. Pompidou had himself, he says, always been "libre et franc" with the General. He now realized that de Gaulle had not been the same with him. He was wounded: "Quelque chose en moi était ébranlé."

This feeling was intensified by the "affaire Markovic" and by the sensation which followed a declaration made by Pompidou in Rome. The former involved the murder of the Yugoslav bodyguard of the film actor, Alain Delon. Immediately rumours began to circulate concerning the involvement in this crime of Madame Pompidou, who was alleged to have taken part in orgies at which both the bodyguard and the film actor were present. Extraordinary statements were made, including one by an illiterate Yugoslav crook who was nevertheless written "dans la langue de Voltaire", and were received with enthusiastic seriousness by journalists, police, magistrates and other officials. No one in the government, with the exception of Jacques Chirac, defended Pompidou or sought to put an end to these wild allegations. The Rome affair arose when, in a speech there, Pompidou stated that in the event of de Gaulle ceasing to be president, he would be a candidate for the succession. This remark was widely misinterpreted deliberately. Pompidou thinks, as a bid for power, and de Gaulle put out a statement to the effect that he intended to serve as president until the end of his mandate in 1972.

Thus Pompidou claims to have discerned an attempt to oust him from his political position, and a series of intrigues organized against him in which a secretive and grudge-bearing de Gaulle played his part. The earlier part of the book consists of notes of the General's conversations during the period of the *Rassemblement*. De Gaulle is acerbic, cynical, pessimistic, proud, critical of many of his supporters: of Debré ("l'ouïssance de la mur des lamentations"), of Jéven ("l'événement est fini"), of Palewski ("ceux qui veulent parvenir se méfient de tout"), of Chaban-Debras ("pauvre Chaban"), and of Edgar Faure, who pretends that he is on the General's side while preparing to abandon him.

In spite of the many occasions, and there are many, when Pompidou expresses his deep admiration and affection for de Gaulle, and in spite of the fact that these memoirs are incomplete and unreviewed, the impression remains that they are critical of de Gaulle. They are in the tradition of Hubert Beauvois-Méry who, following Talleyrand on Napoleon, once said of the General: "Quel dommage qu'un si grand homme ait tant de petitesse."

But why should Pompidou, and his widow, have felt this way? Quite apart from the falseness of treating private conversations as if they were a reliable source of evidence, we probably come back here to the fact that the twenty-one French presidents (or all of them, including Louis-Napoléon) de Gaulle is, the most obviously prestigious, the most dominating and remarkable. For Pompidou, as for anyone else aspiring to succeed to such a unique place, there must have been an apprehension of inadequacy and even of incongruity. Therefore to be able to present a de Gaulle who had his moments of weakness and disability is not only a triumph for Pompidou's skill as a writer, but also a triumph for his ability to portray de Gaulle as a man who is not alone in his greatness. His book will certainly encourage those who

## The science of song

G. W. Ireland

CHRISTINE M. CROW

Paul Valéry and the Poetry of Voice  
302pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£21.50.  
0 521 24182 0

Paul Valéry wrote far more poetry than is generally supposed – most of it before he was twenty. Candidly and correctly judging that very little of this early work was worth publishing, he suppressed most of it and – in the wake of a great emotional upheaval in 1892, in which disenchantment with poetry had its part to play – turned his attention to other matters. His interest in language and literature never faded but he flirted more and more with mathematics and the natural sciences, and increasingly he introduced into the discussion of the findings and implications of what he liked to think of as his poetic experiments the vocabulary and the manner of the natural scientist.

In time the distinction between two quite separate techniques and levels of discourse was allowed to become blurred and Valéry often thought of himself as conducting a scientific enquiry into the gestation and operation of poetic texts. For the most part Valéry's readers have been content to accept his testimony at its face value, and to accept as "scientific" whatever Valéry chose to call by that name. Not all the passionate intensity of his interest in the gestation of poetic texts or the nature of their operation, however, is sufficient of itself to make his enquiry scientific. Nor is the use of any amount of "scientific" vocabulary of whatever kind. At the heart of all scientific enquiry properly so called are certain impartial – and verifiable – observations made in the course of scrupulously controlled experiments. The image of some kind of *in vitro* conducting experiments of this kind in the domain of the arts in general, and of poetry in particular, works powerfully on Valéry's mind to engender such personal myths as *Léonard et Teste*. His vision of Poe is a myth of the same kind. To the extent to which Valéry took Poe seriously and believed either Poe or himself to be in conscious control of the poetic processes in which they become involved, he is once more in the domain of myth.

Mythical too is the "Voice" which haunted Valéry and which Christine Crow has taken as the central theme of her book. The Voice is not unreal. Even the seemingly egregious capital letter has a function. But it eludes both scientific enquiry and scientific description. Valéry is, in any case, more entitled to claim scientific authority in this matter than, for example, a singer might be who, while he could certainly claim privileged knowledge of what it feels like to sing, remains from first to last in total ignorance of wave-theory, acoustics or the physiology of the larynx.

That Ms Crow never succeeds in giving a clear and comprehensive account of "the poetry of Voice" is not entirely her fault. Valéry's contributions to the subject are eloquent and suggestive, but not entirely helpful. How does one deal with pronouncements of the kind: "Le son est la Voix." "La voix est la voix" or "La voix est la poésie", if not by producing responses of the kind: "Poetry is the presence of the voice, seen and not seen." "Voice is the context of poetry conceived as a total action of expressive form involving and integrating every faculty of mind" or simply "The Self is Voice".

Mr Crow echoes Valéry very faithfully but she is too much of a Type B believer ever seriously to challenge his right to tell his readers how to read his poetry. Valéry confides in us, for example, his own view (or one of his views) of *Le Cimetière Marin*: "Le 'Cimetière Marin' est une poésie de type de ma 'poésie' vraie et surtout les parties plus abstraites de ce poème. C'est une poésie de lyrisme (ni caprice) ni de abstraction, mais d'abstraction motrice, plus que philosophique."

The *ni caprice* is disarming, but it does not prevent Mr Crow from feeling that

she is dealing with a "definition" which she promises faithfully to "hold in mind" when "attempting to appreciate the poem from the point of view of its vocal melody".

Her introduction is, in fact, an unusually faithful and discriminating paraphrase of Valéry's own comments, a paraphrase which only once – almost in parentheses – challenges the status of these comments:

Not seeing the inevitable involvement of the perceiving self in its own perceptions as a stumbling-block to objective knowledge, Valéry might be said to accord to individual consciousness a privileged position by virtue of that very involvement.

The point is well taken; but there is even something in the way in which the objection is put that suggests that there is no real need to pursue it further.



Paul Valéry in 1927

The bulk of Ms Crow's book is made up of a number of commentaries – in the manner of the French *explication de texte* – on individual poems. What the reader will gain from a study of these commentaries will depend very largely on what he will be able to understand by them. He will not always find Ms Crow's writing either helpful or encouraging. He may, to begin with, be somewhat taken aback by the looseness of her grasp of English usage (she is weak on prepositions, prone to tautology and shaky on the precise use of words like "talismán") and he may be distressed by the style:

It was this transformational potential which Valéry felt he could trigger in the reader the other way round, by choosing sounds which would stimulate the mind's ear by stimulating the mouth and lungs in the action of reading (not only reading aloud, although that was preferable).

He can hardly fail to be irritated by the constantly recurring, professorial mannerisms. Most of all the reader will be perplexed by a very large number of sentences in which words seem to flap around meaning like ill-fitting sleeves or baggy trouser-legs. Two examples will barely suffice to convey the cumulative effect of writing of this kind.

For although the outer thread of the monologue is always given cognitively to the syntactical structures of thought in its retrospective mode of self-analysis, it is the semi-autonomous presence of the mythical protagonists within it whose voices determine its different registers, inflections and tones.

The poem lyrically and thematically emphasises his position of solitude by incorporating in its second section a powerful critique of sexual attraction, seen from the intrinsically position of Narcissus as a monstrously deceptive and fleeing illusion, and presented at the same time as an ironic "Tristesse d'Olympo" where the Romantic dreams of lovers remembering are seen as inevitably falling short once more of the mind's desired fusion with itself and the world.

Despite these reservations, the overall impression produced by Ms Crow's book is very far from being

simply negative. Its real effect is a powerful sense of frustration. Whatever her gifts in the matter of exposition may or may not be, she cannot fail to sense that she is a superlative reader of Valéry. It is not just that she has "done her homework" to a daunting degree or even that she produces ample evidence of possessing a mind as acute as it is restless. There is an inwardness about Ms Crow's communion with Valéry to which no reader of Valéry can remain insensitive. In spite of the barriers to communication which she herself constructs, Ms Crow succeeds in saying more good things about most of the poems than almost anyone else. And she can express herself with clarity and force. One can hardly, for example, imagine a better comment on *Le Jeune Parque* than this:

It was Valéry's aim to give language its full application to poetry to create the sensation of human nature, enchanted and enslaved by the cognitive as well as creative possibilities of the word ("Faire chanter une idée de l'être vivant et pensant"). The unusually complete action on and through language carried out in *Le Jeune Parque* involves us in the emotion of knowing the drama of the creative sensibility – the drama of voice – in which the Parque and, through her, Image, the poem itself is engaged.

She can write movingly:

I first became acquainted with Valéry's poetry through *Le Cimetière Marin*, his most famous poem. I remember above all the sense of order it conveyed: not simply a logical order, but a deep, alert, intensely expressive order, miraculously maintained through shifts and divergencies of tone and meaning, a strangely familiar "voice" which spoke with an assurance all its own about the less assured nature of human experience – life and death, sunlight and shadow – and which seemed to issue, not from that fictitious narrator, one imagined, musing in a hillside cemetery overlooking the sea, but from a source deep inside oneself "heard" only now that the poem brought it alive or reminded one of it.

And at times radiantly: "Only art can express that grief has a kind of touch when experienced from within."

It is as though Ms Crow, throughout most of her book, had chosen, quite simply, the wrong level of discourse. There is something more than understandable – something very appealing – about the intellectual excitement that has led her into the path she has taken. When she writes that "the process of thought is infinite, incoherent, provisional", she is not being evasive or apologetic. She has certainly no need to be. We feel for her and with her as she shows how well she understands Valéry as he surrenders to the seductions of "the *poésie* – the *poésie* to create". But the reference, as it applies to Valéry, is to a poem – and the juxtaposition of a poem, to Ms Crow's book, with a text that is so largely a poem because it is in prose.

But the intellect as such played nothing like the role in the gestation of his poetry that he himself is fond of claiming for it, and it is certainly not by the intellect alone that his poetry is best approached. The singer who, otherwise than by his song (itself, attempts to convey his experience of singleness, has no recourse but to metaphor – to poetry. Valéry's comments on his own work do not furnish even the elements of a scientific explanation: they enhance its resonance by providing a counterpoint.

It is hard not to regret the fact that Ms Crow should have been so solicited by the intellect and so tempted by visions of scientific enquiry. If only she had been content to leave Wittgenstein, Lacan and Derrida to their own devices and to fall on her own considerable gifts of intuition and sympathy to produce more of the kind of commentary of which I have spoken, by means of which Valéry himself is often given the only kind of access we shall ever have (outside of our experience of the song itself) to the mysteries of "Voice" poetry on poetry.

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Poor fellow! He knew, he could not hope to dwell, and yet, and yet.

Christopher Reid

## In place of the placenta

David Ingleby

R. D. LAING

The Voice of Experience  
178pp. Allen Lane. £7.50.  
0 7139 1330 4

No merely human author could have lived up to the legend which R. D. Laing generated in the 1960s: yet this was not the only reason why his recent publications have come as a disappointment to many. One sometimes suspected that the promptings of the publisher had been louder than those of the muse. A burnt-out case? On the evidence of *The Voice of Experience*, far from it; here, finally, is a book both coherent in its design and sustained in its intensity. If, at the end of the day, Laing's argument seems almost to invite its own rejection, we will have lost a few comfortable certainties by the time we get this far.

The kernel of the book is a set of wildly "unscientific" ideas about the human mind, and Laing starts out with a pre-emptive strike against science itself. His concern is with human experience: science has nothing to say about this worth listening to, since

the methods used to investigate the objective world, applied to us, are blind to our experience, necessarily so, and cannot relate to our experience. Such blind method, applied blindly to us, is liable to destroy us in practice, as it has done in theory.

According to Laing the world of science is created by operations which "exclude immediate experience in all its apparent capriciousness from its order of discourse". Starting with Galileo, scientists have sought to eliminate themselves as experiencing subjects from the picture – and having thus lost sight of themselves, have failed to recognize their own human motives. What are these motives? Science claims our dread:

It was all a machine yesterday. It is something like a hologram today. Who knows what intellectual rattle we shall be shaking tomorrow...?

"Macho" scientists seek to strip nature naked and dominate her: in the words of one biologist, "We torture Nature's secrets from her". But, Laing asks dourly, is this the best way to get to know a lady?

He is surely right when he says that science is blind to its own motives: for the most part, it shelters behind the comforting positivist notion that it doesn't have any. But something is seriously wrong with the idea that experience has no place in it; after all, appeal to experience is supposed to be the very hallmark of science. In part, the confusion is engendered by the delusion common among scientists, that laboratory operations can somehow "replace" "personal knowledge" – an idea which does not survive any philosophical analysis. But the basic muddle is a conceptual one, and Laing himself seems trapped in the very epistemology he attacks: for his own concepts of "experience" and "objective fact" admit of no intercourse between them. "Our experience", he says, "cannot dictate to science on matters of objective fact"; since experience is all we have, "facts" would seem therefore to be unattainable – and if objectivity is for him an illusory goal, it comes as little surprise later on that Laing not only fails to make some of his own claims convincing, but doesn't seem to know how to go about doing so.

This sharp division between experience and fact takes Laing back to a position one thought he had left behind in his early works. There, he had challenged the division of experience into "inner" and "outer"; and showed how subjective certainty was intersubjectively constructed – or, in those unforgettable, "schizophrenogenic" families, destroyed. Now, Laing's universe seems populated by comets, locked in their private worlds, with no means of communication except perhaps, telepathy.

If scientists are blind to the nature of their own "gaze", this failing is all the more treacherous when science turns its gaze on the mind, as it does in

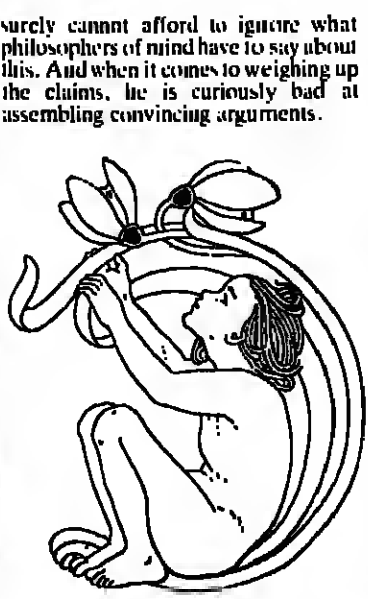
psychiatry. Here Laing is back on familiar ground. Twenty-two years ago, in *The Divided Self*, he presented a devastating critique of organic psychiatry, as exemplified by Kraepelin: here, he broadens the attack to include those who claim to operate outside the medical model. We see more clearly now that the critique is essentially a moral one: Laing has an unfailing eye for the callousness, the sheer effrontery of those to whom "patients" become no more than pressed flowers to add to their collection – or, in his more violent moments, who "bury them alive and screaming in their tomb of words". Even if they call themselves psychoanalysts or existentialists, Laing shows, what they are best at is blaming their own bizarrely deformed way of relating to people (the "diagnostic look") on the patients themselves. Their deliberate lack of reciprocity rules out the possibility of true understanding: for one cannot expect to uncover the humanity of another without exposing at least some of one's own.

Having thus blasted off, like a jealous gamekeeper, at the encircling predators, Laing proceeds to set out his fledglings. These turn out to be exotic birds indeed. We might have mistaken his opening chapters for a defence of common sense and ordinary experience: now, it becomes apparent that for Laing, science too have become so sullied by scientific dogma that they are not to be trusted. Only the mad, and primitive or past cultures, seem to respect the sorts of extraordinary experience he describes here, which are simply incommensurable with both science and common sense. Reliving earlier lives, living out of one's body, casting spells and being spellbound, "hosts of raptures, ecstasies, illuminations, voices, visitations, transportations..." all these are not simply hard to understand within our ordinary frame of reference, but literally impossible: "the stability of a whole world-view is threatened".

Do we really have the right, Laing asks, to consign these experiences to the scrap-heap, to dismiss those who take them seriously as "over the hill"? "Stories of experience we continue to regard as impossible continue to well up from the very depths of ourselves." Our problem is to judge between these subjectively real happenings and our objective knowledge of their impossibility: "Is there a judge of appeal within ourselves who is not an appellant?" Laing himself gives no verdict: his aim, he says, is merely to "open a space in the discourse" – the space which science has crushed out of existence.

The particular kind of "impossible experience" which interests Laing, as we know from his recent writings, concerns mental life before birth and outside the body. He considers the views of Leboyer, Freud, Rank and others on the pre-natal period, and produces the startling hypothesis that the primal relationship which serves as a "template" for all others, may be that between foetus and placenta. The original "tie" is therefore a physical one, the umbilical cord: many people's deep sense of being "cut off" is a quite literal one, stemming from the breakage of this tie, and the partner they yearn for is none other than their placenta. Further back, the implantation of the blastocyst within the endometrium furnishes yet more archaic recollections; and beyond that lies the possibility of previous incarnations.

Laing marshals a formidable collection of data to support these ideas, much of it collected by anthropologists or psychologists. Among the latter, none posited more than a metaphorical relationship between life in the womb and certain myths or mental patterns: Laing, however, argues that a causal relationship is more consistent with the data – preposterous as it may seem. But his arguments are marred by serious deficiencies. There is no analytic approach here to the concepts Laing is using. Knowing what these extraordinary claims mean purely comes before deciding whether they are true. However much he may disagree with their conclusions, Laing



It is here that his problem about connecting the world of subjective experience and objective fact comes to the fore. The "umbilical cord" that is required in this instance is the social activity of negotiating true accounts, and Laing has not much feel for that. Experience can deceive us; yet our

very ability to communicate with each other implies (and is implicit in) our ability to know when it is doing so. To convince us that the extra-ordinary experiences he describes are not deceptive, Laing would have to show that there is no satisfactory way of "explaining them away", but he does not have much patience for that. Yet is it so bizarre, for example, that a woman should dream about a baby at the time when she conceives one; or that patients should recount experiences consistent with their therapists' known beliefs? Again, though Laing may feel little in common with the many psychologists who have investigated paranoïmal experience, this hardly entitles him to ignore their work.

As a therapist, Laing seems to have undergone a kind of regression, abandoning his earlier emphasis on the social world and reverting in a form of biological reductionism even more severe than that of the organic psychiatrists he despises. For there are many social reasons why people might feel inescapably "cut off" – some of which Laing himself uncovered, though he never got much beyond the immediate family.

To prefer a social explanation is a form of *a priori*, of course, but we are dealing here in questions of opinion

and interpretation, and there are strong reasons for suspecting a willingness (to put for the biological and individual. To attribute our unhappiness to pre-natal life is an explanation as satisfyingly complete as it is profound, and far less disturbing than tackling our relationships. Indeed, every psychology has its own way of explaining away alienation: for Freud, it was first the Oedipus Complex, then the Death Instinct; for Jung, the eternal opposition of male and female; for Lacan, the infant's misrecognition of itself in its own mirror image. All of these, like the doctrine of the Fall, manage to exonerate the social order. In psychotherapy, too, we have learned to be suspicious of the short half-life of theories: a sort of planned obsolescence seems to be built into them, so that last year's "cured patient" has to start all over again when the latest discovery is announced. What is behind the Laingian gaze? He of all people cannot ignore, as many scientists do, the motives and presuppositions underlying his own approach.

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the imaginative powers of the poet. Both critics see Humboldt's career, and that of the narrator Charlie Citrine, as illustrating the impossibility of maintaining in our time "the traditional poetic rule established by the great romantics". Humboldt is the "early modernist" genius reduced by the times to living out the stereotype of the Bohemian Artist in an uncomprehending America. Citrine is "the author in a lowered season, making a 'comic end run', who achieves the popular success which eluded Humboldt, but by writing mostly books of a factual rather than imaginative kind: Pulitzer-prize-winning historical or biographical books.

The jointly composed film-script which Humboldt and Citrine write as an undergraduate *jeu d'esprit*, and whose manuscript is left to Citrine as part of Humboldt's legacy or "gift", is made into an immensely successful movie. An irony is that it is Humboldt who forswears the commercial potential of this fantastic tale of a Sicilian cannibal called Caldofredo, whereas Citrine, the connoisseur of the market, never thought it would go down with the public at all. Caldofredo (but not cold!) commits his cannibal deed on an Arctic expedition associated with the famous explorer Amundsen, and the tale also involves Stalin and Mussolini. It is, in other words, a fact-fiction fantasy, that variant of fact-fiction proper sometimes practised by Kurt Vonnegut, and this has powerful post-modern credentials, as well as profiting from a minor cannibal boom in recent letters. No wonder it went down big.

The factuality of fiction, and especially the fictionality of fact, is a great theme of the Contemporary Writers series. Several of the volumes are heavily into post-realism, not only the ones on novelists, but also Bigsby's volume on Joe Grpton: the drama, we learn, is even more inescapably "fictive" than fiction (though the novel remains the measuring rod, and Bigsby's discussion opens with citations from Robbe-Grillet and John Hawkes to the effect that plot, character and the "Conventions of realism" belong to the past).

One of the features of post-realism is that it is obsessed with realism and can't leave it alone. Both Vonnegut and Fowles are rather spectacular cases in point, and Klinkowitz and Conrad offer some necessarily laboured glosses on their respective novelists' witty and knowing experiments with the modes of realist writing. I say necessarily laboured, because the paradoxes do need explaining to uninitiated readers, and are bound to lose some of their shine in the process. There is also a degree of sameness in some of the pieces, a feeling that they could apply interchangeably to either novelist. Fowles novels are more unlike one another than *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and it is sometimes cause for alarm that at the level of abstraction at which critical concepts customarily operate signs and things can so freely be said, without being manifestly wrong, about very dissimilar books.

If reality is a fiction or "illusion", then that other "illusion", which Flaubert described as a total surrender to a story's "truth", and therefore as the supreme achievement of realist art, is doubly illusory, a sleight-of-hand or "illusionism". A feature not only of recent but of much early modern writing has been to accept and display, rather than conceal, the element of fraud which is thus seen to be inherent in art itself, sometimes proclaiming, in a secondary loop, the superior truth of lies. A common consequence has been not the "discarding" of literary conventions, especially those of highly ordered or "well-made" genres, but a determination to bring their workings self-consciously into view. Bigsby brings out well the relations between Orton's plays and some of the more stylized traditions of stage comedy, and he and several others note the presence, in Orton, Vonnegut, Pynchon and Fowles of conventions of the detective story or spy thriller. On this, Fowles himself has written brilliantly in "The English" especially through his explorer does his best to find the answer. The detective tale is in this sense the paradigm of fiction, presenting a mystery in a closed

world of signs so constructed as to permit the illusion of a total decoding. This Fowles "tunitizes", as well he might.

The to-ing and fro-ing between the "real" and the "fictive" which leads to ostentatious displays of artifice, however, often leads also in an opposite insistence on the "reality" of such operations, not only in the special sense in which some lies are heightened truths, but in a plain colloquial-reductive sense ranging from old-fashioned life-likeness to (more or less) pure and simple fact. The fact-fiction novel, whether in its primarily fictional guises (Vonnegut's *Ragtime*, Vonnegut's *Mother Night* or *Jailbird*) or as mainly factual material "novelistically" treated (*Capote's In Cold Blood*, Mailer's *Executioner's Song*), confirms the existence of that hunger for "fact" amid the implausible lights of artifice which ensured the success of the Humboldt-Citrine film-script, and in a still simpler sense made Citrine a best-selling author of factual rather than fictional books.

Mailer has for many years avoided fiction in favour of "novelized" reportage. *A Fire on the Moon*, the book Kernan chooses for his discussion, concerns itself not only with fact, but with scientific-technological fact at that. A character in *Slaughterhouse-Five* had already noticed Mailer going one better still: "people couldn't read well enough anymore... so that authors had to do what Norman Mailer did, which was to perform. In public what he had written." This remark may contain an allusion to a well-known episode in one of Mailer's novels as well as to his works of novelized reportage, and has a more general bearing on Mailer's proclaimed ambition, as reported by Philip Butthuis, "to validate the ideas advanced in his books by eventually acting them out in the world". Kernan reports that Mailer-Aquarius dislikes that modernist art which displays rather than disguises its fictionality, but it is arguable that his outlook shares an essential regard (whether modernist, post-modernist, or other), which is to blur the distinction between language and gesture, to convert "happenings" into art and vice versa. Mailer might in this light appear as a butcher or populist version of something for which the officially accredited post-modernists provide a mandarin counter-part.

The allusion in *Slaughterhouse-Five* also embraces a *nachtwelt* which professes action rather than talk, no insistent masculinity even more memorably described by Brigid Brophy, writing on *The Prisoner of Sex* in 1971: "Mr. Mailer writes in the third person, presumably because the pronoun 'I' wouldn't remind the reader of the author's presence. It is a he, of course, it's he's accumulating these references against the dread day when the world turns out to contain a Mr. Norman Mailer." It is amusing that Mailer protesting his factuality by performing what he writes should be (in a Mailerian phrase) "not unremissive" of his protesting his "malice" by using the third person when talking about himself.

That third person is not of course a device to distance the discourse or make it impersonal. It is a cute way of parading, not concealing, Number One. Fact-fiction offers particular scope to an author determined to assert his own centrality in the making of history. Mailer-Aquarius is present himself as an important participant in the Apollo-11 story, (tradition on which even substantial authentication is provided by historical events, while at the same time allowing the wrinking novelistic mannerism to signal a saving awareness of being engaged in a fictional sport: The him of self-mockery serves to lighten rather than deflate, drawing that slithering attention to the mocker which is one of the marks of post-modernist writing.

In Vonnegut it takes an even more comical form. "I have always rigged my stories so as to include myself," he has said, complaining that in film-versions of his books "the author always vanishes". The author always vanishes. The movie, that *jeu d'esprit* of insolent *roman* (Kernan) is a found wandering in that fiction which is life. I have become an enthusiast for it.

printed word again": the remark coincides with an increasingly direct autobiographical element in his more recent novels.

Vonnegut is the kind of writer who will cheerfully repeat that the *New Yorker* called one of his books "a series of narcissistic giggles" and make that sound like another narcissistic giggle (over here, we should note that he has taken the measure of us too: "There is an almost intolerable sentimentality beneath everything I write. British critics complain about it"). A typical example of the self-chenshing giggle indulged on a scale that can only be called systematic is the narrator's declaration in *Slaughterhouse-Five* that "I really will stop writing 'Hi ho' all the time. Hi ho", followed by continuous repetition of the phrase throughout the book. Connoisseurs of the literary mask will doubtless say that it is not Vonnegut who is speaking, but his persons, like Sterne and Tristram Shandy and so, but for this Vonnegut has an answer which ought to be posted on every mskman's door: "We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be."

It is indeed a decayed Shandyism, down to what Klinkowitz correctly says of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, that it is "a book about writing and is now [I] being written". Fiction which reveals its own fictionality has always been

strong on reminders of the author's "presence", as Flaubert knew when he so insistently advocated authorial self-effacement. Some post-modern fabulators seem to have convinced themselves so thoroughly of the fictionality of everything that they need constantly to reassure themselves and us of their own existence. The idea is to be visible, "now", alive and not so much kicking as panting friskily in your face. Such excesses of nudging self-importance were parodied by Swift, of Robert Scholtes, father of Fabulation Studies, regards as an ancestor of Vonnegut. Swift, jeering might almost be addressed to Sterne *avant la lettre*, which makes Swift post-Swiftian. Sterne knew it, accepted and outfaced the derision, and helped us all on our post-modern way.

Tanner sums it all up in the fine historical sweep of his concluding paragraph on Pynchon: We might want to cite *Tristram Shandy* as an earlier experimental novel that lies behind him; but then Sterne points us in turn back to Rabelais, and both bear the mark of *Don Quixote* (as does Pynchon) — which is, in a manner of speaking, where the novel as we know it in the West began.

After this, what more is there to say except that if Tanner is telling us that *Don Quixote* preceded Rabelais, there is one further post he has not

missed, which is that of post-history. What has Seamus Heaney to do with all this, or Blake Morrison's very good book about him? Morrison makes sporadic efforts to integrate Heaney into the post-modern scene, noticing some self-division, a layering of "often obscure allusions" to the "forcing of traditional forms" to accept the challenge of harsh, "tractable material", elements of "literature that is about itself". But these things are not confined to post-modernism, and Morrison is properly half-hearted about the connection, asserting individually and difference more than the supposed conformity. He knows Heaney's Romantic inheritance but perhaps underplays this traditional element: the silences and intricacies of Heaney's ebanes have more in common with the stern Northern scintillations of Wordsworthian rustics than with the metalences of later times.

Morrison does not allow himself to be sidetracked too far. His book is a model of what this kind of introduction ought to be: informative, lucid, unposturing, very good at the difficult art of choosing passages for quotation, skilful in explaining occasional obscurities without intrusive exegesis, and sensitive and authoritative in judgment. If more books like this one are on the way, they will in due course give this series a different look. It needs it.

which strike me as inadequate: "If the student grew up to be a poet — an Ovid, for example — he might go on performing these exercises in verse, though if he was a good poet they would play only a minor role in his processes of composition" (my italics).

"Ancient Literary Criticism" also requires proper handling of the major branches of rhetoric, the didactic, symmetrical and epideictic divisions. With epideictic in particular, the prescriptions for, and the surviving examples of, speeches from the Second Sophistic deserve prominent attention. They are reminiscent of earlier poetry and whatever their relationship to it, whether these rhetorical texts draw on earlier poetry, or whether earlier poets had access to forerunners of the rhetorical texts, or both, they should not be virtually ignored, as they have been by Russell. One reason for modern dissatisfaction with the so-called ancient literary critics is that those unfortunate were for the most part not trying to be literary critics at all. Indeed, as Russell himself constantly demonstrates, there was no such concept as "literary criticism" in antiquity, and a *kritikos* was not a literary critic. The gap can in part be filled by a proper exploitation of ancient rhetoric.

It is perhaps Russell's underlying belief that a "good" poet and rhetoric can have much to do with each other that has caused what is, to me, a staggering omission. Even, though there is a chapter on "Narrative: The Roman Empire", the greatest poet of the post-Augustan Roman Empire is not mentioned there or anywhere else. This is, of course, P. Papinius Statius, author of the epic *Thebais* and of the *Silvae*. The latter work, composed in the final two decades of the first century AD, contains many major poems written in accordance with the prescriptions of epideictic rhetoric; and in some cases, Statius himself placed over them titles which are those of rhetorical epideictic speeches. An approach to "Ancient Literary Criticism" which ignores the achievements of a major poet who explicitly acknowledges the overlap between rhetoric and poetry cannot ultimately do justice to the rest of ancient literature.

No one in their senses would claim that Virgil or Horace slavishly followed the prescriptions of rhetoricians, although that is what this reviewer is sometimes alleged to believe. But it is entirely sensible, given that a rhetorical training and that much rhetoric originally derives from poetry, to set on any kind of a search for the rhetoricians, as indeed to any other source, which can help us to understand what the poets are up to. If that is so, then any book on "Ancient Literary Criticism" should contain a sympathetic treatment of the *progymasmata*, the elementary exercises of the rhetorical schools. These go back to Hellenistic times and earlier, and they constitute the lowest common denominator of educated culture. Russell declines to do this; and his reason for declining is one of a number of justifications of his position

After *Innocence: Visions of the Fall in Modern Literature*, edited by Terry Otito (230pp, University of Pittsburgh Press, \$19.95, 0-8229-3453-1) is a collection of critical essays on the subject of the fall from childhood innocence as a theme in literature. In the essays' comparisons are made between the treatment of this motif by Blake, Byron and Shelley, and it is drawn between individual works such as *Turn of the Screw* and *Lord of the Flies*; *Alice in Wonderland* and *2001: Space Odyssey*.

# Copyrights and wrongs: D. H. Lawrence

Michael Holroyd and Sandra Jobson

Most writers have a rough-and-ready knowledge of the law of copyright in their country. In the United Kingdom, the normal period of protection lasts for fifty years after the author's death; works not published until after his or her death are protected until fifty years from the end of the calendar year in which publication first took place. An indefatigable term of protection surrounds unpublished material. The same posthumous copyright period obtains in Ireland, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Denmark and Greece; and this may be extended in Belgium, France and Italy for one or more periods of war. Only in the Federal Republic of Germany does posthumous copyright persist for as long as seventy years. In America the recent copyright law confers on new books a seventy-five year period of protection from the year of publication. In all these countries the copyright period has gradually been lengthening until it is now in danger of benefiting the dead author at some expense to the living.

It is a peculiar feature of modern copyright law that books today are usually given the opportunity of earning royalties over a longer period when their authors lie dead than while they were alive. When these royalties are paid to is initially a matter of the author's will. But long before copyright lapses the *antiques* are often going to people unknown to them who have also inherited the power to prevent publication of any of their works and even to stop substantial quotations from them by other writers.

The situation is frequently eccentric. W. H. Auden, for example, left his estate to his friend Chester Kallman, who died leaving everything to his father, a dentist. He then died and, within two or three years of Auden's death, this American dentist's second wife became the beneficiary of the Auden literary estate.

D. H. Lawrence left no will, but his widow Frieda, having successfully argued in court that he had made one in 1914 which was lost, was granted Letters of Administration. She then married their ex-auditor at Spotorno, Major Angelo Ravagli. When she died in 1956 the Lawrence literary estate went equally to the children of her first marriage, to Professor Weekley (Lawrence starred as co-respondent in the divorce) — and to the family of Ravagli (with whom Frieda had committed adultery in Spotorno). For the last quarter of a century, whenever one of Lawrence's works was set for an English Literature examination, filmed by a cinema or television company, or bought by some reader in a bookshop, whenever one of his poems or short stories was reprinted by a publisher in an anthology, the royalties went equally to the Weekleys and the Ravagis.

When Lawrence died Intestate in March 1930 his effects were valued at £2,438 16s 5d. Within fifty years of his death his literary estate had become, in the words of his literary agent Gerald Pollinger, "one of the biggest". Accurate records of this income are not available, but they reasonably be estimated at well into six figures per year — the estate of George Orwell being worth around £100,000 a year; those of C. S. Lewis and A. A. Milne £250,000 a year and that of Beatrix Potter over a million pounds a year.

The credit for this financial success must partly lie with Gerald Pollinger. It was his father, Laurence Pollinger, who helped to quash speculation that Frieda and Middleton-Murry had (in the words of one Lawrence scholar, Keith Sagar) "cooked the will". He had been authorized to give Lawrence's two sisters and his brother £250 each in return for dropping their claim against Frieda — an offer which they accepted and which was recently defined by Gerald Pollinger as "generous".

The Lawrence copyrights were due to start coming into the public domain at the end of 1980 in the United Kingdom, and at various intervals in the near future in America. Within the American Universities there has been a flourishing Lawrence industry and it was in America (once the centre of

much enterprising copyright piracy) that an ingenious argument was advanced for extending the deadline for another full period — seventy-five years in America and fifty in the United Kingdom. Several distinguished publishers, including Methuen, Collins, Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press, had brought out scholarly editions of Shakespeare and other long-dead authors. They had claimed (and no one had challenged this claim) that what was technically called the reversion of an out-of-copyright text could attract a new copyright if an expert revised it, correcting what he judged to be errors (misprints, idle punctuation, literals) and establishing an "authoritative" version. Since this exercise had been successfully carried out with Shakespeare, argued the Americans, why should it not be tried on a modern writer such as Lawrence with a mass market, living beneficiaries and an active literary agent?

An initial incentive seems to have been the widely-held belief that many of Lawrence's books, and especially the major novels such as *Sons and Lovers*, *Women in Love*, *The Rainbow* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, had been adulterated in the publishing process, with sentences, paragraphs and even whole pages omitted, and differing texts competing with one another. Here was the opportunity for a massive exercise in recension that would provide generous scope for establishing new and authoritative texts and, coincidentally, create a profitable new copyright.

This argument was apparently inspired by two doyens of Lawrence Studies in America, Lawrence's bibliographer Dr Warren F. Roberts, and his biographer the late Harry T. Moore. Together with Cambridge University Press, which had decided to publish a seven-volume edition of Lawrence's letters, they approached Gerald Pollinger with a proposal to re-introduce Lawrence's complete works with fully revised texts, their copyrights miraculously revived. Michael Black at the Cambridge University Press recalls that Mr Pollinger was "pleasantly surprised" by this felicitous plan.

A contract between Cambridge University Press and the Lawrence Estate was signed and an academic editorial board set up under Dr Warren Roberts and a leading British Lawrence scholar, Professor James Bolton. Experts were invited to submit prospectuses outlining their schemes for editing specific texts. It was expected that the whole project of about forty volumes would take ten years or more to bring out. The last books (including *Apocalypse*, *The Last Girl*, and the first volume of the letters) appeared shortly after the copyright deadline.

Cambridge University Press have been prepared to invest over a million pounds in this new Lawrence edition, which of course represents a new copyright. It was announced that Michael Black who described the Cambridge Lawrence as an "interesting departure from the normal run of scholarly editions in that it is indissolubly linked with the copyright of the main works themselves". By this, he apparently meant that it was a departure from the copyright in a new edition to be combined with other copyright claims asserted by the beneficiaries. The precise claims were set out in one of the first Cambridge volumes:

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It is when the "corrupt" edition of *The Last Girl* is compared with the cleansed version that the implications

of this elaborate copyright notice begin to seem excessive. The new edition corrects the spelling of the hero's name (Ciccia), restores two phrases, one complete sentence and a passage of sixteen lines in which this cleansed and corrected here "has his will of the delightfully-submissive heroine", as a critic noted in the *Economist*. "For the rest, the changes consist of numerous but minor alterations of punctuation and spelling."

In an article for *The Times Higher Educational Supplement* in June 1979, Michael Black described many of the old Lawrence texts as hopelessly corrupt. The purified narratives, stripped of their scholarly apparatus, would be less, he hoped, to the traditional publishers of Lawrence, Heinemann, and Penguin Books (which fought the courageous and expensive legal battle over *Lady Chatterley's Lover*) for general and popular editions. The old editions of Lawrence, he added, might continue to circulate but the Lawrence Estate would insist on the corrupt text being identified with a mark of disapproval.

In the event it has been another paperback publisher, Granada, which has signed an agreement with Cambridge University Press and Pollinger to bring out the mess-market version of this new edition, with introductions by Melvyn Bragg. Negotiations between Pollinger and Penguin broke down when Penguin refused Pollinger's conditions of a seven and a half per cent royalty and a guarantee that all books would remain perpetually in print. Penguin also understood that they were being asked, through Pollinger's lawyer, to advertise all existing Penguin editions as "Defective". "We flatly refused," said a senior executive at Penguin. "We are glad to be out of it." Instead they have decided to bring out a new edition of the old texts, they say, by some of the same scholars who are working on the Cambridge edition. It is a programme which may further complicate the dense landscape of copyright. Heinemann have no plans as yet to make use of the Cambridge texts. Other publishers too have been experiencing difficulties over quotations from Lawrence's writings.

Gerald Pollinger is recognized in the book trade as an enterprising and zealous agent who works hard for his clients. Authors rely on agents to deal with all this highly important, but also highly unexciting, business of copyright. It is often a tricky matter because so much of it, untested in the courts and expensive to take to court, is built round comforting, inexact phrases such as "a substantial part", "fair dealing" and "sufficient acknowledgement".

How much may be quoted from a copyright work without permission? The Society of Authors's Quilex Guide on copyright answers this question as follows: Generally speaking it is an infringement to quote "a substantial part" of a copyright work without permission. The Copyright Act of 1956 does not define what it means by "substantial" but in one case 4 lines from a 32-line poem were held to amount to "a substantial part". Other legal precedents indicate that the quality of the "part" and its value to the user must be taken into account as well as its length in determining whether it is "substantial". Even a "substantial" quotation from a copyright work may not be an infringement if it is "fair dealing", for purposes of criticism or review, or if it is "accompanied" by sufficient acknowledgement; but the term "fair dealing" is another not defined in the Copyright Act.

To some publishers, Gerald Pollinger's interpretation of "substantial" and especially perhaps "fair dealing" appears to have been over-generous to clients. His job, as literary agent, has been unflinchingly to exploit these copyrights for the maximum advantage of the Lawrence Estate. Mr Pollinger is an honourable man who aims to work within the complex situation that now appears to exist in the wake of the law. But in asserting, as he is understood to have

done, that all the old editions of Lawrence are now back in copyright, he has put forward a claim that, if unchallenged, would have extraordinary consequences. A simple reading of the 1956 Copyright Act suggests that all these books which Lawrence published in his lifetime in the United Kingdom entered the public domain at the beginning of 1981. But if Pollinger's definition of the law is correct, then the filtering through a scholarly process of any manuscript which reveals differences to the printed text automatically gives its author's work a posthumous copyright of up to 100 years in the United Kingdom, 140 years in the Federal Republic of Germany and 150 years in America.

The well-known copyright solicitor Michael Rubinstein (who has acted for Pollinger) takes a different view of the current copyright law. Those parts of the Cambridge texts which are unchanged from other printed texts and which came out of copyright at the end of 1980 (that is, most of Lawrence's published work) may be quoted freely, he says, without permission or payment. The new edition does possess a new copyright, he adds, but this does not affect the copyright position of the old editions. This appears to agree with the opinion at the Cambridge University Press. "I gather," wrote Michael Black earlier this year, "that the topic is of concern" to try and clarify what was admitted to be a "quite complicated" situation. Cambridge University Press circulated a long statement above Michael Black's signature in February in which it acknowledged that a good many of the old texts are now in the public domain. "I would further agree that when the Cambridge texts are out, and comparisons can be made," Michael Black continued,

in many places in many texts the old version will either stand, or be accepted by many people as good enough for working purposes, and I do not myself feel that Cambridge can realistically attempt to restrict the use of this material because it cannot demonstrate that distinctive features of the Cambridge edition are involved. The Estate take a different view about this. Where we agree is that in principle it is desirable that the Cambridge text should be used for serious scholarship and student use, and that we have the right to control that use, on the normal basis that permission is secured for anything more than "fair dealing".

The question then concerns many scholars, writers and publishers is how much of the Cambridge edition constitutes a new copyright. There can be no doubt that the copyright notice at the beginning of *The Last Girl* and other books so far issued, despite the subsequent editorial sent out by Michael Black, is closer to Pollinger's original view and suggests that even when pretty well no change whatever (except the imposition of a house style) has been made in the narrative, it has still been subjected to the editorial process which establishes a new copyright. Who is to say that the insertion of a comma is not a "substantial" change? This puts critics in a difficult position. If they quote from the Cambridge edition, even sections that remain almost identical to the old texts, they must seek and pay for permission. There is, in any case, academic pressure for them to use these new texts in place of the ones which, though often the same, have been labelled defective.

The Cambridge University Press statement entitled *Copyright, scholarly editions, and the Cambridge Lawrence* puts forward a rather dangerous argument with great sympathy, logic and persuasiveness. Textual scholars, it points out, spend years of their lives working on editions of the classics and publishers have large sums of money in these editions. It is therefore only fair and sensible that their joint enterprise should enjoy legal protection. A separate copyright in such works belongs to the publisher who manages it and a "return" is paid, usually on a royalty basis, to the scholar-editor. The issue of profit (which in the case of popular and

student editions may be considerable) goes to the publisher. This process, which is now being extended to include other "classic modern authors" (Pollinger has hopes for adding to Richard Church's pishomous copyright; and Cambridge University Press will be bringing out a new copyright edition of Canard) whose books have recently or will fairly shortly be entering the public domain. That authors' texts go wrong is not surprising, the Cambridge circular explains, "to those who know what circumstance in a author's life or the productions of his books deflect him from his intentions, or subvert them after his death". In such circumstances it is the duty and moral privilege of the publisher who "has established the author and perhaps profited by him, to produce a critical edition" which, properly prepared, "is a distinct copyright in itself".

Since the edit work over all the text, the Cambridge argument runs, "his editorial decision is not just about what is changed but also about what is unchanged". Every word, every mark of punctuation must be examined before, in the great majority of cases, it is allowed to stand exactly as it was. For the editor is applying to the entire text a principle of procedure which he explains in his introduction and displays in his *apparatus criticus* and notes. As for the old texts, they "ought to disappear from the market". Though there will not be significant changes of substance in all the forty volumes of the Cambridge Lawrence, the correction of misprints, the stripping off of housestyling, even the most trivial alteration of punctuation is "like cleaning a picture and enjoying it afresh". Therefore "all the texts in the edition, in all their particulars, are new copyright", and this helps to

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"secure recognition" for the editors. If their books could instantly be re-used or pirated without restriction or redress, scholars would have "no incentive to devote years of their lives to this sort of work", and publishers "would be mad" to go on publishing it.

Not all critics and scholars, not even all Lawrence scholars, agree with this argument. Jelin Sutherland, for example, fears that Cambridge may well insist on exclusive access for their editors to the primary manuscript sources, in which case "there will be a real congestion of Lawrence scholarship" and a precedent for postponing "the moment of emancipation for scholarship". In struggling to get the letters of Lawrence right, these scholars may well be thwarting the spirit of the man and his work. "Lawrence hated the whole business of turning art into property", Sutherland points out. "He really deserves to be freely available. He wanted to be read, not owned."

Dr Keith Sagar has already experienced some of the congestion that Dr Sutherland predicts. When his latest book on Lawrence was published two years ago, he was criticized for not quoting enough from the unpublished correspondence. In a letter to the *Observer* (March 9, 1980) Sagar replied: "I would have quoted much more extensively from unpublished material, had there not been an embargo enforced by the Cambridge University Press. This will apply to all publications on Lawrence either than their own for many years to come." Dr Sagar, who has become a client of Gerald Pollinger and been appointed one of the editors of the Cambridge edition of Lawrence's letters, has nevertheless questioned the moral authority for adding, in the case of

*Sons and Lovers* for example, a good deal of material that was edited out of the original manuscript by Edward Garnett. Lawrence, he reminds us, was perfectly happy with Garnett's editing, writing to him: "You did the pruning jolly well, and I am grateful. I hope you'll live a very long time, to barter up my novels for me before they're published. I wish I were not so profligate or prolix."

Another Lawrence scholar, Professor Emile Dolevany, describes the Cambridge editorial policy as "insidious". It is wrong, he suggests, to amalgamate different versions of a text. "Would I", he asks, "as an author, want my earlier drafts of a work to be published? Of course not." The practice of paying royalties to the living editor of a dead author is one that risks exploiting in a sinister way the separate and sometimes conflicting disciplines of the textual scholar and creative writer. The "new" authentic text may be the writer's "old" rejected narrative. The argument that the scholar retrospectively knows more about the author's "real" intentions than the author (tied to his trade house editor) knew himself in his lifetime is in danger of becoming ever-sophisticated.

Net all novelists and poets would give the same answer to Professor Delavany's question. In a Prefatory Note to the 1949 edition of his novel *Moment Love*, which has just been released as a Penguin Modern Classic, William Golding wrote:

There is a chagrin of authors, not shared or realised by readers and ignored by librarians, a pious wish, for ever thwarted, to withdraw from circulation earlier, unpurified, inferior texts and versions of his books, to be replaced by a revised

edition, and frustrate the nonsense of first editions.

This view would probably have been shared, at least to some degree, by W. H. Auden, Henry James and George Moore. But a different attitude is taken by Margaret Drabble, a corrected typescript of whose novel *The Middle Ground* (with "numerous corrections in ball-point, many pages with new sections affixed by adhesive tape... autograph notes and jettings") was recently sold at Sotheby's. In so far as it differs from the published novel, the typescript may contain one substantial passage that the author would have preferred to keep in. It would however, be wrong to deduce from this that she would want it re-instated. What she has written, she has published: and it must stand at that.

What disturbs some writers is the marriage between scholarship and commerce. It is, apparently, bad publishing that gives publishers the opportunity for repossessing copyright. "I find it difficult to suppress resentment," wrote Sutherland last year, "that it is only fifty years after Lawrence's death, and two years after Leavis's, that the British publishing industry should, with a flourish, tell us that our texts are hopelessly inadequate."

Academic scholars attached to universities do not traditionally depend, like self-employed writers, on a royalty system and the general market place. Good scholarly work may well earn money through academic tenure and promotion. The analogy of textual scholarship with the cleaning of pictures is a pretty one. That itself is a controversial operation that confers no extra copyright on the picture. To enshrine impaired unpublished versions of a narrative,

with the full majesty of copyright is not necessarily in the best interests of literature, however ingenious the textual deciphering. Virginia Woolf, for example, seems to have written several drafts of her biography of Reger Fry. However interesting these might be to contemporary biographers, it would surely be inappropriate to make use of what she called this "fearful niggling drudgery" to manufacture a new Virginia Woolf copyright.

Of course, there have been passages in various books that, because of one law or another, were excised: and it is proper that, in due course, when the law permits it, these passages should be restored. But the edition should survive on its merits in the open market. The annotations, introduction and other scholarly apparatus are all naturally protected by copyright and should ensure that the edition is recommended to students. This is the position with Thomas Hardy, whose work (especially the poetry) was "cleaned" shortly before it recently came out of copyright. Yet there is a Gibson "Variorum" edition in open competition with a Hynes "Complete" edition, published by Macmillan and Oxford University Press respectively. Although their edition is superior to the older texts, Macmillan did not feel they had any moral or legal right to pull Hardy back into the orbit of copyright.

Where perhaps everyone would agree is that the present copyright chaos arises from the extraordinary lack of priority given by the Government to copyright reform. It is now nearly ten years since the Whitford Committee was appointed. The rights of authors have been seriously diminished, retreating before the spectacular advance of technology;

partly because of the difficulty—and in some areas impossibility—of preventing infringements. A blanket licensing scheme for audio and video recording, and a licensing scheme for reprography are urgently needed. The Copyright Council has recommended an extension of the posthumous copyright period from fifty to seventy years, to bring it into line with Germany. If such a change is not to operate against the interests of literary critics, biographers and modern historians then, at some stage, posthumous copyright should change its nature and pass into a Paying Public Domain administered by trustees for the benefit of living authors. "There would be no restriction on the use of works in this category," argued Antonia Fraser in support of this proposal. From as early as 1974 writers have been pressing for such an enterprising variation of copyright. "It would seem sensible, in this way, to put the well-being of the whole profession before the hypothetical good fortune of our children and grand-children," wrote Piers Paul Read. "Nor does there seem to be any reason why the fears of publishers, biographers and those sensitive to the threat of State censorship should not be dispelled in the drafting of the amendment to the Copyright Act."

After the detailed Whitford Report the Government has, heartbreakingly, thrown the whole issue open again to yet more "lively debate". More than twenty years ago the trial over the publication of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* led to the reform of Britain's obscenity laws. It would be fitting if Lawrence's work could render a similar service now to our laws of copyright.

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## commentary

### The magician meditates

David Nokes

SHAKESPEARE  
The Tempest  
Royal Shakespeare Theatre

"The Isle is full of noises": Ron Daniels has taken his cue from Caliban for this new production of *The Tempest* at the main house at Stratford. We are offered a Desert Island Disc show that descends the musical scale from Ariel's sweet airs and fiery lyrics that hang like promises in the air, to the twanging brass and timpani of a golden masque of June. This production treats the play not as a brooding chamber-piece, cast within a magic circle, but as an operatic spectacle, with Prospero as impresario in his exotic island retreat. Maria Bjersens's set of a wrecked spectral baroque, with cobwebbed rigging and tattered sails, is both highly serviceable and lends a rackhamesque enchantment to the stage. Ariel (Mark Rylance) is an androgynous punk, in a body-stocking of exposed veins and sinews, that makes him seem less like an airy spirit, than a strange transparent sen-creature from full five fathoms deep. He is attended by a backing group of clones who hang crooning from the rigging, or hover in their indecorous parachutes. This is a magic show, and each of Prospero's conjuring tricks is the occasion for a *coup de théâtre*. Ariel rises, shimmering his harpy wings to denounce the three moons of sin from a candle-lit gift-wrapped fruit-bowl. His troupe of loquacious drive skeletal dogs with glowing snouts to hunt the other malefactors on the island.

But this is not merely a production of gimmicks, for at the centre of it all is a powerful, but less-key, interpretation of Prospero by Derek Jacobi. This is a performance whose authority comes from an unassuming humanity; from lines which are meditated rather than declaimed, and sentences that are delivered as much in sorrow as in anger. Jacobi's Prospero is a mortal, a scholar whose acquired magical skills seem to be a burden, an embarrassment and a surprise. When he announces "Our revels now are ended" there is a kind of relief mingled with the resignation in his voice. We

are made to understand the appeal of exchanging the insubstantial pageant of moral showbiz for the solid authority of a dukedom; or perhaps, in Shakespeare's terms, of renouncing the stage in favour of the retired life of a landowner.

The shipwrecked nobles at first appear like beached crustaceans, clambering awkwardly ashore beneath the weight of their heavy sea-green armour. Gradually, as the delicate atmosphere of the island strals ever them, Adrian (William Haden) and

Gonzalo (Edward Jewesbury), discard their outer shells. But Antonio (Richard O'Mahoney) and Sebastian (Jeffery Dench) are hard-boiled types, a pair of Machiavellian mannequins who keep their wits and breast-plates about them. There is some fine clowning from Christopher Benjamin as Stephano. Alun Armstrong as Trinculo and Bob Peck as Caliban in routines which combine the slapstick precision of pantomime with a sly verbal patter that milks but does not drain the text. Their antics as would-be

colonists, who believe that power comes out of a barrel of fire-water, offer a striking parody of the more sophisticated power-games of Antonio and Sebastian. Stephano roars, Trinculo snivels, and Caliban, a Ben Gunn in dreadlocks, cavorts like a black-and-white monster. Alce Krige plays Miranda with a credible gawky innocence that nevertheless admits rather more than a few blushes of desire. While attending to her father she is a schoolgirl in pigtail, but when she moves through the island she is the wild thing of Caliban's dreams. Michael Maloney as Ferdinand carries logs with all the unaffected clumsiness of a vacationing undergraduate on a building site.

If there is a weakness in this production, it lies in the eclecticism of its various effects. Stephen Oliver's music plays a major part in creating the magical atmosphere of the island, yet there seems to be no unifying idiom to his musical arrangements. The masque of Juno is a glittering set-piece in the baroque manner of Purcell, which teeters on the brink of parody. Most of the rest of the music of the isles is impressionistic and ethereal, played on electric pipes of Pan; but the set itself seems to cry out for the Romantic melodies of *The Flying Dutchman*. All things are possible to a magician, and Prospero may just as well call up spirits from *Star Wars* as from Olympus or the Cabbala. But at times one has the impression that the old showman is clearing out his props cupboard for *Positively His Final Appearance*.

Yet by the end, Jacobi's self-spoken magician has developed such an intimacy with the audience that his epilogue strikes us not as a thoughtful challenge both to himself and to us. We have seen him give up the role of playing God, and shrink from a magus to a mortal. Ariel has been released, to make the best, or the worst, of his freedom. The powers have all been switched off; we are left to our own devices in a Godless universe, with only the remembered images of Prospero's pageant to guide us. "My ending is despair / Unless I be relieved by prayer," Prospero's renunciation of his magic powers as the stage lights dim, becomes a moving symbolic event that ignites the light of our consciences.



"A Gentleman of the Anacreontic Society", a mezzotint by Henry Kingsbury after Francis Wheatley, to be included in the sale of prints at Phillips on September 13.

### Disenchanted evening

Martin Dodsworth

SHAKESPEARE  
Hamlet  
Donmar Warehouse

Theatres tend to perpetuate the idea that the stage is a magic space where wonders are presented by flooding it with light and leaving the audience in darkness. In Shakespeare's time this device was not possible; the public playhouses depended on daylight, and it is hard to imagine the quality of light they could bestow. The apron-stage was raised above the audience, of course, so that, being beneath the actor, people would feel to some extent in his power; on the other hand, it was possible to sit on the stage itself to see the play. When Brecht described Shakespeare's theatre as "earthly, profane and lacking in magic" it was partly to legitimize his own experiments, but there was some warrant for his account, even if ambiguous. Jonathan Miller's new *Hamlet* is an impressive demonstration of how such an unmagical theatre might work.

He uses none of the obvious Brechtian devices — this is not a derivative production. But everything is directed towards a sense of what is "profane and lacking in magic". The costumes, for example, pay their homage to history in the form of burglinges and ruffs and doublets. They are exquisite, but all are in the same shade of grey, relieved only by a

touch of white here and there — just elegant enough to assure us that they are unremarkable by design. Sober grey repels ideas of the magical.

*Hamlet* is a play with a guest whose entrance seems designed as a *coup de théâtre*. Here he wanders on alone very much intent on his own pursuits and slightly perplexed to find so many people on guard. The effect is unnerving as well as alienating. It is of a piece with the way the whole first scene is staged. Bernardo's exchange with Francisco — usually establishes atmosphere — Bernardo is jumpy, Francisco is glum at heart, it is cold; not a mouse stirring; the magic space acquires its special quality. Not here. Bernardo's challenge is answered from outside the auditorium, and the conversation with Francisco takes place in a huddle in the corner by an exit where half the audience cannot even see them. There is "no atmosphere".

The Warehouse is well suited to this way of doing things, since the audience sit on three sides of the stage and on a level with it; the boundary between acting-space and auditorium is not clear. We are closer to the action of the play; indeed we are bewilderingly in its midst at moments, so that it naturally presents itself as more problematic than enthralling. What we are caught up in is making sense of it.

Jonathan Miller naturally gives clues to interpretation. This is a story of family life. When at the end Fortinbras says of the bodies on stage that such a sight "becomes the field, but here same shade of grey, relieved only by a

touch of white here and there — just elegant enough to assure us that they are unremarkable by design. Sober grey repels ideas of the magical.

Lesser's performance works by not attempting to be "great"; this *Hamlet* is no one's extraordinary. Just as adolescent caught at the stage when he doesn't know who he is to be or what he has to do. He is certainly no intellectual; the soliloquies are shrugged off him with little sense of occasion and none of deep thought. This performance finds its justification in the acting of the rest of the exceptionally well-cast company. Susan Engel and John Shrapnell play Gertrude and Claudius as confirmed adults, thoroughly at home in the world. She is still beautiful and fully satisfied with her role as woman and mother; he is so aware of his natural and forgivable that he should think so little of his guilt. His frustrated prayer impresses chiefly by its admirable frankness. These two give explanation enough for Hamlet's behaviour without the need for ghosts supplied.

or other magical trappings. Miller adds the suggestion, to make sense of the Ghost, that Hamlet is overshadowed by the memory of his own father but fundamentally his version is a teasing account of what a sense of exclusion from the adult world may lead to. The fencing-match is at once a child's game and a test of manhood, in which Hamlet's desperate insecurity topples the balance of the court and plunges them all into disaster; but it lands him a sense of his own powers as, by moral force alone, he compels Claudius to drink off the poison in the cup.

We are becoming used to uchronic *Hamlets*. This one is presented with great conviction and accomplishment throughout, but its fundamentally naturalist assumptions hamper it. Kathryn Pogson's mad Ophelia, all grunts and twitches, is arresting, but cuts out the criticism of court corruption by country simplicities that her ballad-singing implies; she makes it impossible to attend to. Lesser's adolescent uncertainty cuts out Hamlet's constant sense, in the text, of himself as a Prince; the Ghost's status as shadow in Hamlet's mind blurs out the possible metaphysical dimension that properly hovers around the play. Brecht said of the un-magic theatre that in it "people were supposed to use their imaginations". The power of Jonathan Miller's grey *Hamlet* is gained at the expense of the scope for all going beyond the story of an unremarkable teenager, himself

## Two poems by Peter Redgrove

### And its Mother

"One can see the mind of heaven in anything, especially moving clouds."

I.

The thunder and its mother.  
The black anvil and mother of anvils  
Thundering with blows

Among clouds drawing up like armchairs of Jembwool,  
The lambs and their black mother  
As the black ewe flocks her lambs on the hillside,  
But icy cold.

The brass-coloured sky in the storm, its sounding trumpets;  
A chief cloud like a trompette des morts, gold, pulsed with crimson.  
You are spirits,

You eat your food raw  
Grazing on these mountainalms  
Among the walls of mist and the sluggish air

Suddenly winds and thunderstorms and corridors of lightning  
And far patches of sunlit turf.

II.

And suddenly there is a perfect map of the city.  
Drawn in cloud over the city.  
The cloud-city wanders off mock as lambs.

The cloud that built itself over the nursery  
Perfumed with the flower-water it has grazed on,  
That above the distillery is 50 proof,

Above the iron-works, having eaten its smoke  
Flashes like a perfect ingot.

III.

The boat withdraws into the bay  
And into a cave in the bay  
It has its light on.  
The inside of the hill lights up,  
The sun-boat

The liner a lighted palace,  
The fishing-boat a ruined cottage, buoyant,  
The dinghies huge violins with squeaky rowlocks

Rounder their wind's music scored for the water.

### The Young and Pregnant Spiritualist

By mere breathing, she sees her own shape,  
The solemn tranquillity of her naked life  
Under her clothes, a day-long carter.

The life of each altar like a crucifix  
Nailed to the throat, their heads  
Being washed to blackness; she is

Washing their heads with oil  
With her chant, her moaning chant,  
They bow their heads and take it,

All of them, in their circles, the altars.  
She has a baby in her womb that sways in its bonds.  
In treacle, the baby is, communicating with her;

And she tells herself this child is of such virtue  
I am made a prophetess. Accordingly I speak  
From the womb to these nice young chaps

Who serve in county offices and shops;  
I help them jump the counter into this world.  
The draperies flutter at the windows to grimaces,

Straining to speak, the great seamed faces;  
The very air is living with currents like her birth-water,  
And there slowly swims and taps out a pulse

The luminous tambourine to which above their heads  
There floats and forms an ectoplasm  
Like a foot in its robes,

Or like a lily unfolding and from the draperies  
Steps out a naked spirit, with  
A few wisps caught up for modesty, and to herself

This beauty is the adulthood of my baby  
Unspilt and grown; I pray I will meet her  
In our afterlife; but now

She is the centre of this circle; they may ask  
Their questions, and to one she is  
The dead wife returning, to another

His sainted grandmother, seeing her drapery as age,  
Those wisps over the face as wrinkles, but I,  
I know she is the future,

Growing in me and talking round this table.

### New Oxford books: Literature

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#### Oxford University Press











## Alec Nove

On a less grim note: some of the memoirs cite satirical songs and poems composed by Soviet and foreign troops in the camps, and there is even a list of satirical newspapers and periodicals published in the 1920s. Finally, among the anecdotes is one about the affair of the arrest in 1951 of an eminent medical professor on the entry under his name in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. The relevant volume was already in the press. His name was Zelenin. The professor was hastily changed into one on *Zelenaya Pyagushka* - "green frog". Fortunately, Zelenin survived his imprisonment, and the green frog disappeared from subsequent editions of the encyclopedia.

In the *Dizionario Inglese Italiano* the English-Italian section is larger and more systematic than the Italian-English one. Of course the two sections of a bilingual dictionary are not supposed to be mirror images of each other, and it may be perfectly proper to offer as translations, in the target language, lexical items which are not given in the source of the other section. For instance, *ringworm* is here translated as "tricofizia", a technical word which quite rightly does not appear in the Italian section; on the other hand one

capellone "long-haired youth"  
 "basniti"; *contenzione*, in the  
 past tense, "dispute"; *il caso*,  
 not *caso* *integrazione* (a particular  
 arrangement for paying workers made  
 (partly) redundant); *gambizzate* (to  
 kneecap); *gruppuscolo* (small  
 extremist political group); *petrodollaro*  
 (dollar currency earned by oil  
 producing states); *precenno* (a  
 category of untenured university  
 teachers and civil servants in general)  
*volontario* (volunteer); *contributo*  
 (tribution of leaflets). There are collo-  
 quialisms such as *intralluzza* "racket"  
*swindla*, or *tordona* "mutton dressed  
 like (dressed up as) lamb", but none  
*imbranato* (clumsy, inexperienced)  
*inghippo* (hitch, trick, morgan horse)  
*gale* (gale, storm), *ordine* (order)  
 more curiously, *ordinare* term like  
*pennarello* (felt-tip pen – this is also  
 missing in the English section),

instance, the words *pot* and *potter* are separated by a whole heterogeneous group (including *potable*, *pointless*, *potent*, etc.). On the other hand it is the most sensible and convenient form of organization if one wants to look up a particular word and its translation rather than to examine its connections and derivations within the lexicon. The radical entries are also sensibly subdivided into numbered sections with different meanings, with illustrative examples within each section and a list of idioms and phrases at the end of the entry. One problem which this dictionary solves no better than its predecessors is that of the order in which the examples are given within each section.

In a bilingual dictionary reliability of paramount importance and this is borne out by the results of the present study. It seems to be remarkably correct and to compare favourably with the other dictionaries mentioned here. Even from sample testing it is clear that the standard of accuracy is very high. Occasional misprints occur (vs. *penna* "to weighout"), or factual errors (vs. *virgin*, the *virgin birth*, i.e. the birth of Jesus Christ, vs. *virginità* (Gloss: *la castità*) Immacolata Concezione, which refers to the conception of the Virgin, not by the Virgin), or slips (a *buongiorno*, over *il buon gusto di non fare qualcosa* is turned into "to have the good taste to do something"). The translations are normally exact except for a few errors. *Ritinaequivoca*, vs. *equivoco*, is not well translated as "perfect rhyme" but "philologist" is given, correctly, as

translation of *filologo*, but also of the adjective *filologico*; *sv*, *stato*, the expression *stato civile* is translated as "registry office". Some "false friends" are not distinguished as clearly as they should be: *assassin* is rendered as "assassino; sicario", but in fact *assassin* means "murderer", and the Italian section is not fully explicit in its renderings (*assassino* "murderer; assassin; assassino; sicario" "murder; assassination (spec. per *malvivente politico)*; *assassinare* "to assassinate; to murder"). *Virtuole* is translated as "virtual" but *virtuale*, more correctly, is rendered as "in pratica; di fatto effettivo; (*talvolta*) virtuale".

In other cases renderings are incomplete or infelicitous: *andromeda* "entrance way" does not seem to be the common denotation of a large entrance hall (in a school etc.); *fettuccine* is not provided with the sense (in the plural) of a kind of pasta, and *fennec* "tagiatielle" is not given; *scorfinus* "scorpion-fish", does not give the (surely more common) figurative sense of "ugly person": sv. *teccare*, *teccatore* does not seem to give the fencing (non-figurative) sense of "touch": sv. *salvato* the expression *levare (tagliare) il salvato* is rendered as "to fail to greet" which seems infelicitous as the English phrase could indicate accidental omission whereas the Italian implies a deliberate non translation. In other cases we are given no translation but an explanation in the target language: sv. *to fail, a hit-and-run accident* "un incidente stradale con fuga dell'investitore" is more suitable for an Italian who wants to understand the English phrase than for an Englishman who wants to translate into Italian.

But there is no dictionary which could be criticized in this way. In the end it is a question of balance between good and bad points, and in comparison with other works. With the *Dizionario Inglese Italiano* and the *Inglese* the good points outweigh the bad ones; it ranks among the three or four best dictionaries of its kind.

element, we have: Hitler's Germany, Gollari's Argentina, or for that matter Stalin's or Brezhnev's Russia.

Mr Waller is concerned to present the argument in a somewhat more elaborate form, however, in substance I take his argument to be the following: Lenin's thought on the party "does not begin in 1902 in *What is to be Done?*" as has previously been held to be the case, but rather in 1905-06 when this briefly re-witted factions of the RSDLP agreed that the party "must be organized on the principle of democratic centralism". At this time, and by implication in the eleven years thereafter, Lenin was "assigned" to democratic processes and value which atrophied in the early years of Soviet power" and more especially after the ban on factions in the Bolshevik Party imposed with the unanimous agreement of Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin in 1921. In short, Lenin was really a democrat, and Democratic Centralism, properly understood, is "democratic". It became centralist "only after the Bolshevik conquest of power, and did so for a multiplicity of reasons, which will risk subsiding under the phrase "enforced isolation of the Soviet Union".

The failure of the world revolution, and the resulting isolation of the Soviet Union, are the two main factors in the matter. The rest is history, in a way.

I do not find Waller's argument convincing. In his closing chapters he reprints well merited criticisms by Malcolm McEwen, Roger Garaudy and Louis Althusser of the centrally characterful of the Communist Parties of Britain and of France. Yet he fails to mention Luxemburg's much more convincing criticisms of Lenin's organizational principles and practice, first made in *My Note* in 1904, and amplified in 1918, long before the "degeneration" of Lenin. Waller had taken place. Waller ignores altogether - he appears not to have read, and certainly not to have considered - Trotsky's even more perceptive critique published in *Our Period* in 1904. One does not need to admire Trotsky the man, nor to share his political outlook; to be astonished by the frenzied and perceptive about this text, even most eighty years old, manifests every tooth.

Trotsky knew Lenin personally, had worked alongside him, had seen the

If Lenin was indeed a democrat in the years 1906-17, why then, did nobody notice? Why did the Bolshevik split re-appear and endure? Why did Trotsky, instead of reconciling, maintain his sharp differences with Lenin over the "organizational question" until as late as June 1917? Robert Michels, in his classic study *Democracy and Political Parties*, of which Walter has no mention, has shown how on the basis of the experience of the SPD, mass organization tends to feed on itself, until such time as the bureaucracy inevitably becomes the master and subjects the captive masses to its triumphant will. Twentieth-century experience points to the conclusion that democratic organization tends towards oligarchy. The very structure generated by "democratic centralism" makes oligarchic rule inevitable, and the many present-day Lenolists "Culls

**Pre-Revolutionary Russian Science Fiction: An Anthology (Seven Utopias and a Dream)**, edited by Leland Fetzer (253pp, Ann Arbor: Ardis Publishing, \$27.50, 0-88233-594-4) contains six science-fiction stories from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which illustrate the Russian tradition of science fiction.

**Longman** 





## The hard-wearing lexicon

G. P. Butler

GERHARD WAHRIG, HILDEGARD  
ZIMMERMAN  
ZIMMERMAN

Brockhaus Wahrig: Deutsches  
Wörterbuch in sechs Bänden  
Dritter Band: G-JZ  
837pp. Wiesbaden: F. A. Brockhaus.  
Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt  
3 7653 0312 7

Of the monolingual German dictionaries now on the market, those associated with the name of Gerhard Wahrig (d. 1978) come in three sizes, and the earliest, a fat single-volume *Deutsches Wörterbuch* first published by Bertelsmann in 1966, is probably still the best of its kind, certainly better value than the pocket *Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* put out by dtv the year Wahrig died. Of course the latest *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, the "Brockhaus Wahrig" to which the present volume belongs, draws heavily on the Bertelsmann version: definitions have needed little updating, and etymologies virtually none, since Wahrig's own revision of 1975.

Beyond that, the principal

distinction between Bertelsmann and Brockhaus appears to be that Brockhaus simply covers more (and sometimes fresh) ground – as it well might: after all, it is to be a six-volume dictionary, and the equivalent of today's 1,600-odd columns on G-JZ (vol 3) occupies less than 600 slimmer ones in Bertelsmann. The distinction is not, however, as clear or quite as significant as it may seem: both Bertelsmann and, perhaps more pertinently, Brockhaus's obvious rival, the recently completed six-volume *Das Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* issued by Duden, avoid the repetitiveness in which Brockhaus evidently revels. To list, as Brockhaus does, forty-seven compounds beginning with "Gesellschafts-" or "gesellschafts-" and spoil each one in full is to waste space; to list and define "Gesellschaftswissenschaft" and then, starting on a new line, not only list and define but also illustrate the adjective that arises from it is to waste still more. Duden – with perfect clarity but in smaller print on smaller pages and using a little for the compounds' common denominator – does ample justice to a total of thirty-six such terms, including "wissenschaft", in less than a column (the Brockhaus entries take two and a half), leaving you to work out for yourself what to do

with "wissenschaftlich". The ems thus saved – and it must be a very large number overall, German compounding being what it is – have been absorbed into a few "e" which is characteristic of Duden and which, as a matter of policy, Wahrig's team dismisses: quotations from literature, exemplifying usage, have been excluded from Brockhaus in order to avoid giving "the impression of randomness" ("den Eindruck der Zufälligkeit") – a six-volume "general" dictionary of the German language is judged too small to encompass such material satisfactorily. The result of this fastidiousness is that Duden, averaging a mere 500 pages a volume, with fewer entries per letter than Brockhaus and less than 1,000 columns devoted to G-J, is the more interesting dictionary by far – and, if only for that reason, arguably the more useful.

Brockhaus naturally indicates the origins of the lexis it presents: "Volkspflanzen", for instance, the folk counterpart of "Volkswagen" in Hitler's day, were nicely nicknamed "Goebbelspflanzen" (a term not found in Duden) and we are told who Goebbels was; similarly, the ever popular "Götterzeit" (roughly speaking: "lick and stir") is traced back to the play it came from. But such information is at bottom etymological – both

dictionaries are strong on etymology – and, however noteworthy, it is no substitute for the detailing of illustrative data, from both literary and non-literary sources, which enlivens large and largely dictionary world-wide. It's all very well to be reminded (as we knew from Bertelsmann) that "Heckel" is what we might call "fuss [and bother]" or "twaddle", that it is a masculine noun, forms its genitive in -a, has no plural, and is colloquial. But that is effectively the sum of what Brockhaus has to offer. How much more satisfying to learn in addition, as we do from Duden, at least something of the printed contexts in which the word has occurred: that Ulrich Plenzdorf uses it in his best-known book, published in 1973 (and now enshrined as an A-level text), and that it cropped up during the same year in the West German television and radio weekly *Hör zu*. The passages in question are quoted, together with precise references. True, Duden's tale is longer in the telling; and for Duden's twenty-seven words beginning with "Heck-" or "heck-" Brockhaus has assembled no fewer than fifty-four. Moreover, as its specimen documents lose currency, Duden will clearly be seen to date, whereas Brockhaus can only mellow with the while.

For the time being, however, no

matter how random Duden's samples, the majority of serious students of contemporary German, of whatever nationality, will surely prefer to have, say, the definitions of "Halbesleben" (Heinrich Böll and Uwe Johnson "Halbesleben"), "Haltlosigkeit" (Fritz Werfel, "Haltlosigkeit" in Thomas Mann and Frank Thiess, "Haltlosigkeit" in Erich Maria Remarque, and "Haltlosigkeit" in *Der Spiegel* – rather than the unattributed, at times uninformative but generally hard-wearing sentences and phrases which show Brockhaus's vocabulary at work. Such students are bound to want access to Brockhaus, especially in order to seek out terminology which Duden either could not record (the volume corresponding to Brockhaus's G-JZ appeared in 1977) or chose to omit. They should find it in every college library that still caters for non-academics: well produced, well-ranging, as up to date as can be expected, at a price which is not beyond most individuals' financial reach, there – and on a few grand coffee-tables – is where it belongs. As for Duden, starting saying: it belongs on whatever shelves have room for it; and at DM 58 a volume it is a low-risk investment, at any rate for academics with tenure.

## Handing down Hellas

Margaret Alexiou

J. T. PRING

The Oxford Dictionary of Modern  
Greek: Greek-English and English-  
Greek

370pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford  
University Press. £9.50.  
0 19 864137 0

On that first morning, smiling bland,  
With sheets of foolscap, quills in hand,  
To write *ad nauseam* and *ad nauseum*,  
Followed by fifteen hundred pages,  
What nerve was ours  
So to back our powers  
Assured that we should reach *odds*  
While there was breath left in our bodies.

In this humorous poem on the completion of Liddell and Scott's Greek Lexicon, composed after Liddell's death in 1898, Thomas Hardy rightly perceived that the Greek lexicographer's lot is not an easy one, although he wrongly assumed that he records only "words, accents not to be breathed by men or any country ever again". The nucleus of modern Greek vocabulary has been handed down from ancient Greek, albeit with morphological and semantic change, and there is much truth in an Athenian lady's observation to the French neo-Hellenist H. Pernot, that "the Greek vocabulary records only births, never deaths". The infinity of the Greek language has fascinated modern Greek writers no less than it has Jacques Derrida, who characterizes it as "rich with all the alluvia of its history... [admitting] its powers of seduction while playing on them unceasingly". Hidden layers of meaning can always be uncovered, as Cavafy observed with reference to *theoria* and *metéte* in their older senses of "contemplation" and "meditation". New compounds can always be created, like Kazantzakis's

two Nobel prize-winners within the past two decades (George Seferis and Olyseus Elytis), and honorary degrees from British universities for Elytis and Yiannis Ritsos, whose poetry has been translated into no less than twenty languages. The success of recent cultural events in London further testifies to wider public interest. The dictionary will find a ready and expanding market.

Everyone will have different criteria for evaluating a dictionary, but paramount are: clarity and consistency of entries; accurate definitions covering all uses (including technical and figurative); range of vocabulary adequate for specialized needs as well as for colloquial usage; systematic presentation of variant forms. On all these points this dictionary scores outstandingly well in comparison with others of its size. Pring's entries are a model of concise clarity – yet warn of possible pitfalls. Take the Greek for "wood", for instance. The entry, four and a half lines long, gives "ξύλο: s.n. (piece of) wood; & (pl.) firewood; (fam.) *mbo* – to get a beating", as well as an idiom and a proverb – that is, fewer examples but as much information as in Crigton's seventeen-line entry. And if you wonder what "beating" has to do with "wood", look up *triglo*, where you will find in addition to its primary meaning "beat", such intriguing other meanings as (active) "rich, squander, wear out, nag, beat, suffer" and (passive) "quarrel". Translators and native speakers alike will turn first to Pring for the clearest and best coverage yet of tricky English use of prepositions with verbs, eg "put" (about, aside, by, down, off, on, up, etc.), each separately entered for additional clarity – although I would rather know how to "tuck in" my shirt or blanket than my round in Greek, the last posing no real problem. There are judicious renderings of such colloquialisms as

"drup-out", "all-round", as well as for many words which have no Greek equivalent, like "embarrass" or – more surprisingly – "hangover" [the phrase "indisposition after drunkenness" is not quite what one might feel like saying]. A spot check on terms required for legal, financial, medical and other specialized texts reveals remarkably reliable basic coverage, although "conceptual" could not be inferred readily from its related entry, and "percept/perceptual" are absent. Seekers after current phraseology will find "behaviourism", "disarmament", "racism", "terrorism" and "unilateral", if not "flashy", "sexism" or "structuralism". Others will forgive the omission of such English -isms in view of the inclusion of such Greek Addenda as the succulent *glikofori* – "lollipop", the quaint *plafiori* – "hod", and the pertinent *perikopio* – "curtail, reduce (expenditure)" (but why no *perikopi* (pl) "cuts"?)

In view of the book's express aim to render English words and phrases "into colloquial language of everyday use", it is disappointing to find so many obsolescent "puristic" (katharevousa – K) forms retained where perfectly standard demotic (D) ones exist, particularly as their selection seems arbitrary, and leads occasionally to unnecessary repetition. Absolute consistency here is impossible, but now that the "language question" has been largely defused, why insist on the K suffixes rather than D-i for a certain class of feminine nouns? And why list all place names only in K forms, when D forms are now in official use (Greece is "Ellada" – nowhere mentioned – to most Greeks, not "Ellas", and even in Greece road signs slowly change)? *Eortazo* for "celebrate" is perverse, as anyone who has been invited not to round for a drink on someone's name-day will confirm that *yorizo* *sinero* is the standard phrase. It is also

inconsistent with entries for *iatros* / *iatros* – "doctor" and *iads* / *iads* – "son". Variant forms are sometimes, but not always, listed, often without cross-reference: for example, both K and D forms for the numerals 7 and 9 are given, but for 8 the English-Greek lists both, while Greek-English refers *ochto* to *ochti* even though the author favours the former in the Preface. The dazed reader seeks out the verb "thim" only to find *thim* referred to *chyp*. Surely more systematic treatment in the Preface of such phonological phenomena as vocalization and consonantal dissimilation could have obviated these bewildering double entries, leaving some space for what is the most regrettable omission of all in an otherwise excellent dictionary – the lack of guidance (although this is standard practice in comparably sized dictionaries of all other European languages I have consulted) on the formation of tenses. In the case of Greek, where the unpredictable stem-changes of a highly complex verb-system dictate that you cannot deduce according to any rational principle how to form the past and future tenses of such common verbs as "go", "come", "see", "know", "say", "eat", "drink", some help is desperately needed. No one expects a dictionary to be a grammar, but a brief note of each verb's tense and some general rules in the Preface (with a list of common verbs which do not conform) would have saved many from hours of frustration.

Perhaps my last point is less a criticism than a *cri de coeur*: now that we have a good Oxford Dictionary, dare we hope for an equally reliable and practical Greekman, based on current usage? Meanwhile, Pring's invaluable Dictionary will prove a *sine qua non* for all serious travellers to Greece, as well as for students of the language.

## Clever talk

Victor King

ANTHONY RICHARDS  
An Iban-English Dictionary  
417pp. Oxford University Press. £25.  
0 19 864325 X

The Iban, or Sea Dayaks as they are used to be called, are probably the most well-known, extensively photographed and fully documented indigenous ethnic group of the island of Borneo. There are studies by both foreign specialists and eminent Iban scholars on Iban social organization, economic activities (in particular the shifting cultivation of hill rice), religion and oral tradition, grammar, customary law, socialization, history (especially Iban migrations and their relations with the Brooke Raj in Sarawak), and social change.

Before the publication of Anthony Richards's dictionary there were already two substantial Iban lexicons available, though both have their inadequacies. Of the two *A Sea Dayak Dictionary*, compiled by William Howell and D. J. S. Bailey and published in 1900, is the most reliable and informative although there were problems of inconsistent entries in several of the transcriptions and some entries were not as accurate nor as full as they might have been. The phonetic difficulties were largely solved with the publication in 1956 of a second dictionary, *A Dictionary of Sea Dayak*, compiled by N. C. Scott. Scott's most significant contribution to Iban studies was the establishment of an acceptable phonology and a systematic spelling of the Iban language. But as a dictionary Scott's comparatively slim volume is sadly

inadequate and it has been subsequently heavily criticized.

Now students of the Iban, and scholars with a general interest in Borneo, have a comprehensive and sound Iban dictionary. The publication of this dictionary is important on a number of counts. First, as Richards himself indicates, the Iban language, which is a member of the Malay category of languages, is spoken by about one-third of the population (ie, about 300,000 people in 1970) of the East Malaysian state of Sarawak; it is also the language of as many as 100,000 people in the Indonesian province of West Kalimantan. Second, as a consequence of the numerical superiority of the Iban, and more particularly their former aggressive expansion through large areas of West Kalimantan and Sarawak, they came into contact with, and absorbed, killed or dominated, several small tribes in the area. Some of the remaining minority groups, which are close neighbours of the Iban, have adopted Iban words into their own language and frequently use Iban as a lingua franca. Third, the Iban language is being increasingly recorded in scholarly books and journals and in popular publications issued by such organizations as the former Borneo Literature Bureau. Despite this, Richards maintains "Iban remains primarily a spoken language". Indeed, some years ago another Iban-watch, Erik Jensen, also remarked that "The Iban are a very word-conscious people. Highest praise is to be called a clever talker (*payad bejako*). It is an essential qualification for office, and it frequently happens that where rational argument conspicuously fails an appropriate allegory will suc-

ceed." Nevertheless, in comparison with other indigenous languages such as Kayan, Kenyah, Bidayuh and Melanau, that of the Iban has received considerable publicity in print. A number of Iban songs, stories, myths, poems, sagas, incantations and laments have been published and translated.

Anthony Richards's dictionary represents many years of meticulous and detailed lexicographical research in this country, and an even longer period as Sarawak administrative officer in direct contact with Iban from many different districts, speaking their language fluently and recording their culture. He builds on the strengths of Howell, Bailey and Scott, but he avoids the shortcomings of their dictionaries, qualifies some of their findings and adds a substantial amount of new information which did not appear in their work.

Richards's dictionary is far more than a mere recording of words and their meanings: it is a major reference work on Iban oral tradition and custom. There are items on places, personages, tribes, deities, spirits, legendary heroes, rituals, augury, material culture, economic activities, historical events, flora and fauna. For example, there are extended commentaries on familiar figures in

Iban culture – Keling, "the serpent with a human face"; Kumang, "the goddess of beauty"; Lang Singalang Burong, the god of war and head-hunting and father-in-law of the principal omen birds; and Pulung Gana, "the deity of the earth". Not only are we given detailed information on these supernatural beings but Richards has also undertaken the difficult task of translating poetic passages which describe and eulogize important deities and spirits. It is impossible to do justice to these various translations, but to take a few at random by way of illustration: the wife of Anda Mara, the god of wealth, is described as "Lady of the box which moves and quivers in starlight; she of the precious case like the compass treasured by merchants"; Belampong, the Crested Jay and the swiftest of the omen birds, is represented in invocations as "the young man who hunts about the land, the royal one, brave of heart with the marks of a skilled hunter upon him, (whose nose is among) *sempitang* trees (red) menall"; split with a rending noise like that of a man tearing down a funeral house, and their long branches falling upset the nest from where the young palm civets look out upon the world". The wife of the omen bird Beragai is called "she of the hanging red hibiscus flower in full bloom, *Dayang* Kuning, the flower of the pumpkin, ancient planter that is a sin to cut, (at) the mouth of the ancestral". Richards also provides information on places, peoples and events located in West Kalimantan from whence Iban trace their early migrations and history and their most important traditions. Apart from the work of translation, I was both surprised and delighted at these minutiae which Richards has sought out and set down for, though a few of the entries on places and tribes could have been expanded, and certain of the comments on ethnic affiliations need some qualification.

For the Ibanman Richards has provided a brief general introduction on the Iban, information on sources, orthography, the derivation of words, and an English-Iban index of the words of the longer and more important entries; there is also an explanatory note on the layout of the entries. For readers without a knowledge of the Iban language there are notes on pronunciation, stress, changes in the form of words, and a guide to the structure of nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions and so on. The work also contains a reasonably comprehensive bibliography of material on the Iban.

like quality. The end-papers, back and front, are filled with 100 English and French proverbs, selected by Anthony Burgess and Pierre Daudet, accompanied by their equivalents in the other language or of *transliterations*, and adorned by portraits of the famous authors. But it is not explained what the point of these beautiful lists might be. Proverbs can be taken as representing – either – ancient folk wisdom or collective confusion, and they so often contradict each other. The choices would only have been significant if each selector had accompanied his half-hundred with a commentary explaining what he thought of proverbs and how far he was presenting the folk-wisdom seriously or ironically. As it is, the proverbs might have been picked out of a hat to go with the photographs for purely mercenary reasons. To make matters worse, the "equivalents" are debatable. "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" is surely very different to "If I had a hammer, I'd nail the hell out of you". The end-papers would have looked more distinguished if the editors had been asked to select fifty famous quotations expressing what is considered to be the literary essence of his native country, but even that would have hardly been consonant with the universal dignity of a dictionary.

## Advancing definitions

R. R. K. Hartmann

J. B. SYKES (Editor)

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of  
Current English: Seventh Edition  
1264pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford  
University Press. £7.75.  
0 19 861131 5

WILLIAM T. MCLEOD and  
PATRICK HANKS (Editors)  
The New Concise Oxford Dictionary  
of the English Language  
1388pp. Collins. £7.50.  
0 00 433091 9

P. PROCTER (Editor)

Longman New Universal Dictionary  
1158pp. Longman. £6.95.  
0 582 55542 6

If I had written this review in the style of a dialogue between two eminent scholars, one British and one American, they would have commented on the current flood of English dictionaries against the background of their own personal experience, demonstrating that lexicographers too are only human, and the products of their labour only fallible articles rather than ultimate authorities.

In a conventional critique, I can only try to give the reader an impression of what three particular English dictionaries are like by setting up a framework within which to make sense, comparisons. One useful framework might be the threefold division of lexicographical functions into recording, description, and presentation. Recording means the collection of material, usually in text form, which documents a particular period or type or sample of language; description means the characterization of the vocabulary thus selected for dictionary treatment; presentation means the arrangement of the information for the benefit of certain groups of users. All dictionaries, including the Oxford *Concise* the

Collins *New Concise*, and the Longman *New Universal*, go through these stages, although the majority still leave much to be desired in terms of recording and presentation.

This is hardly surprising. In the manufacture of any article, the professional will get much more satisfaction out of the production process itself than from the raw material input or packaged output. So let us first concentrate on the central task of description. Great strides have been made in this area, partly no doubt because of sharply increased competition between the publishing houses. The oldest of the three dictionaries under review, the Oxford *Concise*, is in this respect most in danger of falling behind its newer rivals.

All dictionaries are better than they used to be in distributing the information along and across their entries. The Collins *New Concise* and the Longman *New Universal* tend to break up the load among a greater number of separate headwords, while the Oxford *Concise* still crams a lot of items into some awkwardly long entries, eg by listing *laid-back* and *lay-by* under "sub-entry" *lay*. Definitions are becoming clearer all the time and everywhere, as is the specification of grammatical details and the labelling of levels, styles and fields.

To indicate pronunciation, the Oxford *Concise* uses its own peculiar respelling systems, adding strange squiggles to conventional letters. The Collins *New Concise* uses the international phonetic alphabet which may be more familiar to linguists than to laymen. The Longman *New Universal* tries to avoid the two extremes of unrecognizable traditional spelling and alien symbolology by devising a new system based only on well-known letters and letter combinations with the exception of the schwa.

There is also some progress in marking divergent usage. This is a thorny problem to which neither linguists nor lexicographers have paid proper attention; it is difficult enough to determine whether a particular

expression is "frequent" or not, but how do you verify and grade its "acceptability" by different speakers? Thus actual usage, observed usage, preferred usage and received usage (with or without the rationalizations of appointed judges) remain only partly tackled by the usage notes of this year's crop of dictionaries. To take just one example, the old chestnut "impertinent" has been resurrected by the Oxford *Concise*, stressing the distinction between its two senses "impertinent" and "uninterested" by marking the latter with a D (for "disputed usage"). The Collins *New Concise* warns the user with a triangle that "careful writers and speakers avoid this confusion", and the Longman *New Universal*, otherwise the least priggish, notes that the second sense is "disapproved by some speakers".

The three dictionaries can differ considerably when it comes to the job of describing pronunciation. The variant *exquisite*, for example, with the stress on the second syllable, is stigmatized by the Oxford *Concise* with a D, but listed in first place by both Collins and Longman, which presumably reflect someone's preference for it.

In this maze of linguistic etiquette, the influence of American lexicographical practice is sometimes apparent, though not fully acknowledged. Both Collins and Longman have adopted such techniques to a level of perfection not previously expected in a general-purpose middle-size dictionary. The original Collins *Concise* was in fact an American publication; the *New Concise* is an abridgement of the Collins *English Dictionary* which caused quite a stir among British lexicographers when it appeared in 1979. The Longman *New Universal* is the result of a joint venture with an American dictionary publisher, although they make more capital out of the claim that they were the first publisher of a well-known dictionary. Longman's certainly lead the field in developing another American tradition, viz. that of providing encyclopaedic information. On the basis of the widely known but often ignored fact that words and things are very closely

intertwined, subject-based tables and diagrams of one to four pages are supplied at periodic intervals in order to illustrate linked concepts from *alphabet*, *anatomy* and *architecture* to *video*, *weather* and *word* (games). It is too early to say whether the latter feature is merely a throwback to much earlier forms of unfortunatized reference works or might set in motion a new phase of experiments with non-alphabetic arrangements of linguistic and conceptual matter.

Progress has been much slower in the functions of vocabulary recording and presentation. The three dictionaries looked at here exemplify many of the inherent difficulties of the process of gathering lexical data and modifying them to suit specific user needs. It is a truism that language is both continually changing in time and varying by the different contextual settings in which it is used. If lexicographers want to keep on top of these external factors of communication, they must make sure they have adequate records of the kind of discourse they want to describe. The Oxford *Concise*, whose seventh edition follows close at the heels of the latest supplement of the *OED*, has always had a kind of love-hate relationship with its parent, relying on access to its historical corpus but stressing at the same time that current usage is at least as important as past use. Yet it supplements its vocabulary data by accidental accretion; for example, by volunteers sending in neologisms, rather than systematic field-work. The Collins *New Concise* similarly has no textual data-base of its own, but condenses the lexical store of its bigger brother, the Collins *English Dictionary*, by deleting much useful material, for example biographical and geographical names. The Longman *New Universal*, which has more entries, if not pages, than the 1978 *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, is based partly on new data, partly on borrowed lexical research archives, information which is coordinated by computerized checks and balances.

The last of the three functions, presentation, is perhaps the most important. The idea that

dictionaries should be designed for particular users and specific purposes is not entirely novel, but for the first time, dictionaries have the opportunity (and the duty) to gauge and satisfy the demands of a variable range of consumers. These three dictionaries are still remarkably indistinct in this respect. The Oxford *Concise* seems more concerned with its own task of lexicographical description than with its anonymous readers, the Collins *New Concise* refers vaguely to "academic and general users alike", and the Longman *New Universal* sees itself as a guidebook for the whole family (grandma will have a little trouble reading the small print).

We do need more and better dictionaries (and these three go some way towards supplying this need), but with vastly improved systematic recording techniques and methods of establishing user-specific formats, it seems entirely possible today that increased international (not just transatlantic) contacts, communication technology, and training programmes will give us better products tomorrow.

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